CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

MONDAY ▸ JANUARY 26, 2026 ▸ VOL: 11 ▸ ISSUE: 192 ▸ PAGES 12 ▸ ₹2.00

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India stands for peace even as world faces conflict: Prez

Humanity can remain secure only if there is peace: Murmu

NEW DELHI

Amid escalating geopolitical tensions across several regions, President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday said India is spreading a message of peace globally, stressing that peace is essential to secure the future of humanity.

Addressing the nation on the eve of the 77th Republic Day, the President touched upon a wide range of issues, including national security, women empowerment, poverty alleviation, economic growth, cultural unity and governance reforms.

Murmu outlined India's civilisational commitment to

universal harmony, describing the country as a "messenger" of peace in a conflict-ridden world. "In our tradition, we have been offering prayers for peace to prevail in the entire universe. The future of humanity can remain secure only if there is peace in the whole world," she said, adding that India continues to spread the message of peace amid conflicts in many parts of the globe.

'Self-reliance in defence gave Op Sindoor success'

Underscoring India's firm commitment to national security, the President highlighted the success of Operation Sindoor, a precision strike that dismantled terror infrastructure across the border.

"Last year, our country launched precision strikes against terror infrastructure terror centres were destroyed, and many terrorists met their end," she said, attributing the operation's success to India's growing self-reliance in defence.

'Surprised, shocked': B'desh on Hasina's Delhi speech

NEW DELHI

Bangladesh said on Sunday it was "surprised" and "shocked" that India had allowed former prime minister Sheikh Hasina to make a public address in New Delhi.

Hasina (78) has been in India since August 2024, following a student-led protest that ended her 15-year rule. She made her first public speech since then in an audio address in Delhi on Friday.

She was found guilty in absentia by a Dhaka court in November of incitement, issuing an order to kill and inaction to prevent atrocities and was sentenced to be hanged.

EU trade deal: 'India to slash tariffs on cars to 40%'

NEW DELHI/BRUSSELS

India plans to slash tariffs on cars imported from the European Union to 40% from as high as 110%, sources said, in the biggest opening yet of the country's vast market as the two sides close in on a free trade pact that could come as early as Tuesday. Modi's government has agreed to immediately reduce the tax on a limited number of cars from the 27-nation bloc with an import price of over 15,000 euros ($17,739), as per reports.

Ashoka Chakra for space hero Shukla

NEW DELHI

Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, who created history by becoming the first Indian to visit the International Space Station, has been honoured with the Ashoka Chakra, India's highest peacetime gallantry award.

In June last year, Shukla, 41, also became the second Indian to have gone to space. He flew to the ISS as part of the Axiom-4 mission. The Indian Air Force test pilot's 18-day space odyssey came 41 years after Rakesh Sharma flew aboard a Russian Soyuz in 1984. Shukla's space flight had set the stage for achieving India's own ambitions of human spaceflight - Gaganyaan - and building the Bharat Antariksha Station soon after.

Dharmendra, Achuthanandan among 131 Padma awardees

NEW DELHI

The Centre on Sunday announced the Padma Awards for 2026, approving 131 civilian honours across the Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri categories.

The list includes five Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri awardees, cutting across public life, arts, cinema, literature, sports, science and social service.

Padma Vibhushan
- Dharmendra Singh Deol (Posthumous)
- K T Thomas
- N Rajam
- P Narayanan
- V S Achuthanandhan (Posthumous)

Padma Bhushan
- Alka Yagnik
- Bhagat Singh Koshyari
- Kallipatti Ramasamy Palaniswamy
- Mammootty
- Nori Dattatreyudu
- Piyush Pandey (Posthumous)
- S K M Maeilanandhan
- Shatavadhani R Ganesh
- Shibu Soren (Posthumous)
- Uday Kotak
- V K Malhotra (Posthumous)
- Vellappally Natesan
- Vijay Amritraj

8 from Karnataka featured in list

Shatavadhani R Ganesh and former BJP Rajya Sabha member Prabhakar B Kore are among the eight personalities from Karnataka to feature on the list of Padma awardees this year.

The Padma Shri list for 2026 reflects a wide mix of nationally recognised figures and grassroots contributors. In sports, Indian cricket team captains Rohit Sharma and Harmanpreet Kaur Bhullar has been awarded the Padma Shri, along with women's hockey player Savita Punia The arts list includes actor Prosenjit Chatterjee, classical vocalist Tripti Mukherjee and folk and traditional artists such as Tarun Bhattacharya and Pokhila Lekthepi.

The awards also recognise several "unsung heroes" for their contributions to social work, indigenous art forms, healthcare, education and heritage preservation across the country. This year's list includes 19 women, six foreigners or persons of Indian origin abroad, and 16 posthumous honours.

Better Life For All
Better Opportunities For All

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA

Inspired by the Constitution

Guided by Gandhian Ideals

On this **Republic Day**, we reaffirm our faith in the Constitution of India, a solemn promise of **Justice**, **Equality**, and **Dignity** for every citizen.

The **Guarantee Sarkara** stands rooted in **Mahatma Gandhiji's vision** of an inclusive India, where governance is compassionate and the State stands with the weakest first.

Happy 77th Republic Day

Shakthi | Anna Bhagya | Gruha Jyothi | Gruha Lakshmi | Yuva Nidhi

"To protect and respect our vibrant culture and tradition," is a Fundamental Duty of every citizen. This is affirmed by our Constitution.

CMofKarnataka https://dipr.karnataka.gov.in/
karnataka information

QUICK READ

Society CEO selected for R-Day function

Bengaluru

S Narayana Sharma, the CEO of Hoskote Town Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society, has been selected by Central government to participate in the Republic Day function at Red Fort, New Delhi. This selection is made considering his valuable contribution for the overall development of organisation. He is one among the 13 Primary Agricultural Cooperative society of state who have been selected. He is participating along with his wife at the function. President K Satish and managing committee members have congratulated the CEO for his selection.

Woman drug peddler held with 1 kg ganja

Bengaluru

Devanahalli police arrested a 30-year-old woman on drug peddling charges and seized one kg of ganja from her. The accused, identified as S Mamatadevi, a resident of Poojanahalli village in Devanahalli and originally from Bihar, was caught red-handed while allegedly selling ganja near her house following a tip-off. She has been remanded to judicial custody at Bengaluru Central Prison.

Show cause notice for participating in TV prog

Bengaluru

A show cause notice has been issued to Congress party worker Seema Kouser for participating in a TV debate on January 23 without party permission. KPCC Media and Communication Department Chairman Ramesh Babu has issued the show cause notice asking her why disciplinary action should not be taken against her for violation of party guidelines. She has been directed to submit the explanation within 3 days.

Transgender arrested for robbing trader of Rs 38,000

Bengaluru

A trangender was arrested by the Nelamangala Rural police for allegedly robbing a man of Rs 38,000. The victim Venu had come to Bengaluru from Anantapur on Friday evening to sell vegetables and was returning to his Bolero vehicle after unloading them at the market when the incident occurred.

B'LURU LEADS STATE IN MISSING CHILDREN CASES

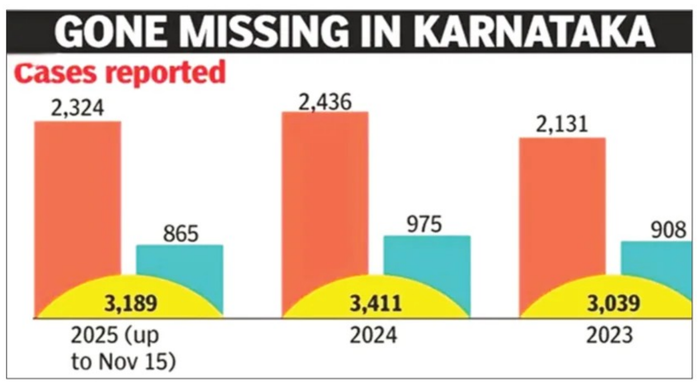
In 3 years, 9,639 cases of missing children reported in state; 1,094 remain untraced

BENGALURU

City recorded the highest number of missing children in Karnataka over the past three years, with 3,268 cases.

Police data show that girls make up nearly three-fourths of these cases, though officials say most incidents are not actual kidnappings.

Under Supreme Court guidelines, police register all missing minor cases as kidnappings. Police say only 2% to 3% involve crimes such as ransom, sexual assault or property disputes, most cases involve elopement or minors running away from home, often after family conflicts. Between January 2023 and November 15, 2025, 9,639 children went missing across the state. Of them, 6,981 (72%) were girls, and police traced 86% of these cases and reunited the children with their families.



During the same period, 2,748 boys were reported missing, of whom police traced 2,479 cases, a recovery rate of 90%, according to home department data. Police linked Bengaluru's higher numbers to its population and urban lifestyle. Being the capital of the state, Bengaluru has a larger population, and this is why the number is higher here. Cases mostly involve elopement and running away from home as minors are exposed to a modern environment.

Also, the lifestyle, where mobile phones have become part of everyone's life, influences minors to take steps like elopement or running away. We saw many cases where boys and girls, scolded by parents or guardians for overusing mobile phones, ran away from home, a senior police officer said.

Police said families report missing girls faster than boys. When parents or guardians find their daughter missing, they will not hesitate to approach the police because they want to ensure the safety of the missing girl. Also, in elopement cases, it will be the girl's family who will come to the police first. When a boy runs away, the family will not act hastily. Also, boys who run away on their own mostly return home, unlike girls, the officer said. Investigators said kidnapping cases place immense pressure on police to ensure a victim's safety.

They stop using phones, never contact family or friends, travel to faraway places, and so on. However, we can trace them with the help of technology like CCTV footage, the officer added.

Citrus fruits banned in Central Jail over alcohol brew fears

BENGALURU

The Central Prison at Parappana Agrahara has banned citrus fruits such as oranges and grapes, citing fears that inmates could ferment them to brew illicit alcohol inside the jail.

Announcing the decision, Director General of Police (Prisons and Correctional Services) Alok Kumar said only select fruits, bananas, apples, mangoes, guavas and chikoos will now be permitted, along with limited quantities of dry fruits.

The curbs are part of a broader clampdown by the prisons and correctional services department to tighten security and prevent the misuse of items brought from outside. Inmates will no longer be allowed to receive extra clothing or bedding. While undertrial prisoners may keep two sets of plain clothes, convicted prisoners will be provided with clothing and bedding by prison authorities. The department has also reiterated its ban on outside-cooked food. The restrictions follow repeated instances of prohibited items being smuggled into the jail through food consignments. The measures apply to the state's largest prison, which houses around 4,800 inmates, including more than 3,400 undertrials.

Our main focus is to restrict cooked food from outside. Inmates can bring up to 2kg of fruits and 0.5kg of dry fruits during visiting hours. Only bananas, apples, mangoes, guavas and chikoos are allowed; fruits like grapes and oranges are not, Kumar said, adding that 0.5kg of bakery items such as biscuits, cookies, namkeens and chips would also be permitted. Retired prison officials said grapes contain high natural sugar and yeast on their skins, making them ideal for fermentation. Even small quantities can be fermented discreetly.

'Prison food of FSSAI standards'

"We treat all inmates equally. Prison food quality is good and certified by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), and we are open to grievances related to food, clothing and bedding," Director General of Police (Prisons and Correctional Services) Alok Kumar said.

State govt move to take action against guv condemnable: MP

BENGALURU

Former Chief Minister and Member of Parliament Basavaraj Bommai has said that the state government, purely for political reasons and to cover up its own failures, is making allegations against the Central Government, which amounts to disrespect shown to the Governor.

He stated that this is an affront to the Constitution, and that initiating legal action against the Governor is highly condemnable.

In a post on X, in this regard, he said that there are many instances in the past where Governors have not read documents from the first page to the last page. Using abusive language against the Governor is an insult to the Constitution and to the constitutional office of the Governor. Taking legal action against him is extremely condemnable, he said.

He further stated that the conduct of senior legislator BK Hariprasad reflects the mindset of the Congress party, and that it is absolutely necessary to take action against him. Bommai also pointed out that when HR Bhardwaj was the Governor earlier, there were numerous instances where he exceeded his limits and acted in violation of the law. He questioned whether Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has forgotten that Raj Bhavan had once turned into a Congress Bhavan.

Is K'taka a democracy or a police state?

Doesn't Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who is a self-proclaimed constitutional expert and lawyer, have at least the knowledge that a bill cannot become a law without the governor's signature and official publication in the gazette. The fact that the police are threatening opposition party workers by citing a bill that has not yet been officially implemented is a clear example of how police offices in the state have become Congress party offices. The day is not far when self-respecting Kannadigas will overthrow this anti-Hindu Congress government.

State survey identifies 10,365 transgenders

BENGALURU

A 2025-26 baseline survey on gender minorities submitted to the state government has identified 10,365 transgender persons across the state.

Vijayapura district reported the highest number of gender minorities at 1,428, followed by Chikkaballapur (1,252), Bengaluru Urban (757), Kolar (638) and Belagavi (618).

The survey, conducted by the Department of Women and Child Development in association with the Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation, was carried out in 31 districts since Sept 15 last year to assess the social, educational and economic status of gender minorities. As per a statement by the office of Women and Child Welfare Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar, as per the survey 10,250 transgenders are above 18 years and 115 are below 18.

'Women have excelled in all fields like men'

BENGALURU

MLA ST Somashekhar said that women can become financially strong through self-employment and a self-reliant life.

Speaking after inaugurating a free sewing machine and beautification training center organized in Kengeri Kote ward of Yeshwantpur assembly constituency, he said, the time when women were limited to just housework is gone. It is a good development that women are equally involved in all fields like men. In recent times, women have also achieved a good position financially by engaging in self-employment such as business and industry. In this regard, the government has formulated many programs and advised them to make good use of them and strengthen their self-reliant life.

Lamborghini owner replaces silencer, gets relief in court

BENGALURU

The Karnataka high court has stayed proceedings against a city resident booked for rash driving after videos of his loud Lamborghini surfaced online.

Justice M Nagaprasanna passed the interim order while hearing a petition filed by BR Chiranth of CV Raman Nagar in the city.

The court noted that Chiranth had already paid the fine imposed for the violations and had replaced the retrofitted silencer that caused excessive noise. In view of this, the court decided to stall further probe against the petitioner until the next hearing on February 6.

The judge added that appropriate orders will be passed at the stage of closure if the proceedings are found to be in Chiranth's favour. Kengeri traffic police had registered a suo motu case after videos showing the Maharashtra-registered Lamborghini being driven in a reckless manner went viral on social media. The incidents were reported to have taken place on December 14 and December 19, 2025. Despite the fine being taken for the offences under Indian Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, the crime was registered on the ground that the driver hadn't changed the retrofitted silencer. Chiranth then moved court, claiming the fine had been paid and the retrofitted silencer changed.

Experts seek flexible use of digital tools in autism care

BENGALURU

Experts from across disciplines have called for a fundamental rethink of how digital tools and artificial intelligence are designed and deployed in autism care, urging that technology remain flexible, human-centred and responsive to individual needs.

The recommendations emerged at the third Global Autism Convention organised by St John's National Academy of Health Sciences, in association with several organisations.

Speaking at a symposium Digital Tools & AI-based Interventions, autism advocate and app developer Alice Mamaga Akosua Amoako from Ghana underlined technology's potential to bridge global gaps in care while warning against a one-size-fits-all approach. Some children are highly tech-savvy, while others may avoid screens entirely. Parents, caregivers, teachers, and professionals must understand each child's individual needs, interests, age, and developmental level before choosing any digital or AI-based intervention, she said.

Echoing the call for customisation, Matthew K Belmonte of Nottingham Trent University pointed out minimally speaking autistic individuals are often excluded from research despite having relatively intact comprehension.

Presenting a Bengaluru-developed, open-source, iPad-mediated therapy, he stressed that digital platforms should function as enablers rather than constraints. He highlighted how alternative communication pathways can uncover abilities overlooked by conventional assessments. Citing an example, he said iPads typically assess responses based on the point of contact made by a child, whereas recognising the moment of departure from contact could be more meaningful. When the departure is recognised, the computer's response can be more congruent to the user's intention, he explained.

Bringing an engineering and neuroscience perspective, Suresh Sundaram, professor at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), challenged rigid behavioural models. "We all recognise an apple even when we can't explain how—autism works the same way. Behaviour emerges from functional brain networks, muscle memory, and subtle emotional signals, not deterministic rules," he said, advocating probabilistic, data-driven approaches using multimodal data such as brain signals, behaviour, language, vision and physiology. He noted stereotypical behaviours in autistic children can appear suddenly without obvious triggers, and that identifying underlying causes could help interrupt escalation. "By using vision-based systems and sensors, it becomes possible to study gaze patterns and emotional changes more closely," he said. "These micro-emotions play a critical role in behaviour and can easily go unnoticed. Children are highly sensitive to such cues and often read emotional changes more accurately than adults.

Engg seat blocking scam: ED attaches assets worth ₹19.46 cr

BENGALURU

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), which is probing the engineering seat blocking case, has attached assets worth Rs 19.46 crore of BMS Education Trust. The ED stated that the immovable properties have been attached on charges of money laundering.

Cases were registered at Malleshwaram and Hanumantha Nagar police stations on the complaint of Karnataka Examination Authority for illegal allocation of engineering seats by blocking them. The ED had also registered a separate case on the charge of illegal money laundering. Last year, the ED had raided 18 places including the houses of members of BMS Education Trust, colleges and middlemen.

The probe revealed that the Trust's management had blocked and sold seats through intermediaries and agents. In return, ten times more money was collected from students directly and through educational consultant agents. But the trust's accounts did not mention the sale of these seats. Evidence of Rs 20 crore being collected through such seat blocking was available, and Rs 1.86 crore in cash was also found.

In this way, the members of the trust had purchased property with illegal earnings.

LOOPHOLE OF DELIMITATION

Kasavanahalli turns orphaned ward post delimitation

BENGALURU

Kasavanahalli, along with Junnasandra and parts of Haralur, is fast turning into a civic no-man's land in the wake of Bengaluru's recent delimitation exercise, caught in a limbo between corporations, budgets, and bureaucratic silence.

Until recently, this 26 sqkm stretch functioned as a single administrative and budgetary unit under Bellandur ward in Mahadevapura zone. Today, it stands fractured with the splintering of old Bellandur into six wards Yamalur, Bellandur, Doddakannelli, Panathur, Gunjur, and Kasavanahalli, leaving residents unsure of which ward or corporation they now belong to.

While Kasavanahalli, Junnasandra, and parts of Haralur shifted to the South city corporation, the projects and funds tied to this geography remain with East city corporation. The result is administrative paralysis: no officers on the ground, no money to act, and no clarity on responsibility. One of the starkest examples is the long-pending Kasavanahalli Road widening project. Initiated in 2021, the work is still incomplete. Residents say the project was about to resume when the formation of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) led to funds being diverted to East city corporation. Fresh funds and tenders are yet to be finalised, stalling the project indefinitely.

This apart, basic civic services such as road cleaning, desilting of drains, encroachment clearance, and pothole repairs stopped.

Vishnu Prasad, a member of Kasavanahalli Development Forum, added, there is no engineer, no health inspector, no official accountable for this ward. Residents who recently met Ramesh, Commissioner of South City Corporation, said officials have privately acknowledged the problem. With budgets apportioned earlier to the East city corporation, South city corporation has no dedicated funds for the transferred areas. Even urgent works cannot be taken up without a money head, forcing officials to explore emergency funding merely to keep essential services running, said a senior GBA official of South city corporation.

Sudharshan Shashtry, of Kasavanahalli Development Forum, said, there are no officers in place, not even an AEE, and files are stuck with a single official.

Drains are choked, sewage flowed back into apartments, and no one knows whether the GBA or BWSSB is responsible. Residents also allege political apathy. This is not seen as a vote bank, said John Shehan, a long-time resident, pointing to the lack of interest from elected representatives.

QUICK READ

Bagalkote police nab thieves with gold loot

BAGALKOTE

Police have arrested a gang of thieves involved in multiple thefts across Bagalkote and Dandupalya areas. The gang, who worked as daily wage sugarcane harvesters, targeted houses and carried out chain thefts at night. Badami police caught the suspects in Manganur Thanda, Maharashtra, linking them to six cases, including recent mobile and house thefts in Rona taluk. Four main accused—Shankar Pawar, Abi Bhosale, Karan Bhosale, and Lakshmi Ashwini—were taken into custody. Authorities recovered 76 grams of gold ornaments worth Rs 6.08 lakh. A special police team led by DSP Santosh Banahatti successfully conducted the operation, earning praise from officials.

Gadag celebrates National Voters' Day with art

GADAG

As part of National Voters' Day, an art exhibition was held at the District Administration Building to raise awareness about the importance of voting. The exhibition featured self-created paintings highlighting voter responsibility. Dr. Nanda Hanabaratti, Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Department, praised the effort and thanked District Commissioner C.N. Sridhar. The event was attended by Sub-Divisional Officer Gangappa M, Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary C.R. Mundaragi, DSP Murtuja Khadri, Tahsildar Srinivasa Murthy Kulkarni, and other officials. Students also participated and viewed the artworks, making the event a creative way to engage the community in voter education and civic responsibility.

Savita Maharishi Jayanti celebrated in Koppal District

KOPPAL

Savita Maharishi Jayanti was celebrated at the District Commissioner's Office Hall, highlighting her divine birth under Lord Shiva's vision, said Karnakumara K., Assistant Director of the Kannada and Culture Department. The program, organized with the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and Kannada and Culture Department, honored her contribution to Samaveda and her Brahmagyan knowledge. Speakers emphasized learning from her principles to build a strong, educated, and respectful society. They noted that crafts, education, and moral values strengthen individuals and the nation. Savita Samaj President Maresha Gangavathi, local leaders, and district staff attended, paying tribute to her legacy and timeless teachings.

MP highlights development works in Koppal town

Under the PM Usha scheme, Koppal and Turuvihal colleges receive infrastructure upgrades, repairs, and new facilities worth Rs. 5 crore

KOPPAL

Koppal MP Rajashekar Basavaraj Hitnal said significant projects are underway in the fields of national highways, education, and technology across the Koppal Lok Sabha constituency. He spoke at a press conference at his office in the District Administration Building on Sunday.

The MP said comprehensive development plans are being implemented in Koppal town and nearby areas with support from the Central and State governments. Under the One Time Improvement Road project on National Highway-63, Rs. 43.03 crore has been allocated. The project includes construction of two large flyovers, two small flyovers, seven culverts, two pipe culverts, roadside drains, streetlights, high-mast lights, and retaining walls, with total work costing Rs. 5 crore.

Significant work is also being done in higher education under the PM Usha scheme. The Government First Class Women's Degree College in Koppal town is receiving infrastructure improvements, building repairs, and additional facilities at an estimated cost of Rs. 5 crore. Similar upgrades, including library renovation and new rooms, are being carried out at the Government First Grade College in Turuvihal town of Maski constituency.

Under the MP Local Area Development Scheme, Rs. 4.9 crore was sanctioned for 2025-26, of which Rs. 4.85 crore has been utilized. An AI Excellence Center is being built at the Sub-Regional Science Center in Koppal at an estimated cost of Rs. 1.8 crore, aiming to make Koppal a model district in education, infrastructure, and technology. The MP also highlighted ongoing construction of branch post offices in several villages under CSR funds, with new projects set to begin in Gunnal.

The press conference was attended by media representatives, the MP's personal assistant Aruna, and staff from the Information Department. Hitnal said the focus is on ensuring government funds directly benefit the public and accelerate local development.

Four Namma Clinics opened in Gadag city

Each clinic, serving around 3,000 families, will provide minor illness treatment, free medicines, and basic tests, ensuring accessible quality healthcare without distance or cost barriers.

GADAG

Four new "Namma Clinics" were opened in Gadag city on Sunday, bringing basic health care closer to thousands of families. District In-charge Minister H.K. Patil inaugurated the clinics at Doragalli, Kurahatti Pet, Hamalara Colony, and Ashraya Colony.

Speaking at the event, the minister said the goal is to see clear improvement in people's health within a year. He expressed confidence that the clinics will make medical care easier and faster for local residents, especially poor and middle-class families.

Each clinic is designed to serve nearly 3,000 families. They will offer treatment for minor illnesses, free medicines, and basic tests such as blood pressure and diabetes checks. The minister said the government wants to make quality health services available near people's homes so that no one delays treatment due to distance or cost.

District Health and Family Welfare Officer Dr. S.S. Neelgund said 21 Namma Clinics are now working across the district, including seven within Gadag city. The plan is to have one clinic for every 15,000 people. Each center has four staff members and also supports national health programs, vaccination drives, and disease screening.

He added that weekly yoga sessions will also be held to improve both physical and mental well-being. Officials urged citizens to make full use of these free services and attend regular check-ups.

Local leaders, doctors, and municipal officials attended the inauguration. The launch of these clinics is expected to strengthen primary health care and bring timely medical support to neighborhoods across Gadag. Residents welcomed the move and said nearby clinics would reduce travel, save money, and help families seek early treatment.

Vijayendra warned Karnataka faces financial crisis, alleging government hikes prices and promotes liquor sales, harming families while funding guarantees

Vijayendra slams state government over development failures

HUBBALLI

BJP state president and MLA B.Y. Vijayendra strongly criticized the Congress-led Karnataka government, accusing it of failing to deliver development despite being in power for more than two years.

Speaking to reporters in Hubballi, Vijayendra said the state had not received meaningful funds for growth, and that no major new schemes had been introduced. He claimed even flood-hit areas in North Karnataka had not received proper attention, alleging that concerned ministers had not visited affected regions.

Vijayendra also expressed worry about the state's financial health, saying Karnataka was moving toward bankruptcy. He alleged the government was struggling to fund its guarantee schemes and was instead increasing prices to raise revenue. He further accused the administration of encouraging liquor sales to fill its treasury, a charge he said was harming families.

Referring to a recent house handover event, Vijayendra argued that the housing project had actually begun during the previous BJP government under B.S. Yediyurappa. He said land had been provided through the Slum Board and that the Centre had supported the project financially.

The BJP leader also accused the government of misusing laws to silence opposition voices. He alleged corruption in the excise department and claimed illegal money was influencing governance. Vijayendra further criticized what he described as selective policies aimed at pleasing certain communities.

The Congress government has not yet responded to these allegations. Political observers say such exchanges are likely to intensify as parties prepare for upcoming body and parliamentary contests, with both sides expected to sharpen their campaigns and trade charges over development, welfare spending, and governance in months ahead.

POCSO

Four men sentenced in Belagavi POCSO case

BELAGAVI

A special POCSO court in Belagavi has sentenced two men to life imprisonment and two others to 20 years in jail for the gang rape of a minor girl. The court also imposed heavy fines and ordered compensation for the survivor.

The main accused, Saqib Nizami, aged 22, and Ravi Nayodi were given life terms along with a fine of Rs 8.76 lakh each. The other two accused, Rohan Patil and Ashutosh Patil, were sentenced to 20 years in prison and fined Rs 6 lakh each.

The judgment was delivered by Judge C.M. Pushpalatha, who also directed the Legal Services Authority to provide Rs 10 lakh as compensation to the victim. The court appreciated the speedy investigation and trial, which led to the case being completed within eight months.

According to the prosecution, the crime took place on May 10, 2025, at a farmhouse in Savgaon near Belagavi. The girl was forced to drink beer before the assault. The accused also robbed her gold chain, police said. The victim's parents filed a complaint at Tilakwadi police station soon after the incident. The case was later transferred to Market police station for further investigation. The prosecution was led by Special Public Prosecutor L.V. Patil. Police officials said the court's order sends a strong message that crimes against children will be dealt with firmly. Child rights activists welcomed the verdict and said quick justice gives courage to families to come forward and report abuse without fear. They urged society to stay alert, support survivors, and ensure safe spaces for every child at home, in schools, and in public places across the country.

Massive Chorla Ghat robbery probe intensifies

BELAGAVI

Belagavi Superintendent of Police K. Ramarajan shared key details about the sensational ₹400 crore robbery case reported near Chorla Ghat on the Karnataka–Goa border.

Addressing a press conference, the SP said Belagavi police received a letter on January 6 from the Nashik District Superintendent of Police about a major robbery allegedly involving old currency notes. The letter mentioned that a man named Sandeep Patil was kidnapped in Nashik on October 22 by a suspect identified as Vishal Naidu. During questioning, the kidnapper reportedly spoke about a robbery that took place earlier, on October 16, at Chorla Ghat.

Based on this information, Belagavi police have formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT). A sub-inspector from Khanapur is part of the team. Police have also spoken to Sandeep Patil, who confirmed that the accused had mentioned the robbery during captivity, the SP said.

Ramarajan clarified that Chorla Ghat lies at the junction of Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra, making the case complex. He said Belagavi police will accept complaints from any victims or witnesses who come forward. Maharashtra Police are leading the investigation, and Karnataka Police are extending full cooperation. He also announced that new CCTV cameras will be installed in the Chorla Ghat area to improve security.

In a separate case, two men were arrested for robbing gold ornaments worth about ₹10 crore from a jewellery shop in Hunsur last December. The accused were caught in Bihar with help from the Bihar STF, and some stolen items were recovered. Police are searching for three more suspects.

Shirahatti marks Voters Day with awareness rally

SHIRAHATTI

The 16th National Voters' Day was observed in Shirahatti with a strong focus on voter awareness and citizen responsibility. A SWEEP awareness jatha and celebration program were organized by the Taluk Administration and Taluk SWEEP Committee at Devaraj Arasu Bhavan Auditorium. Civil Judge and Judicial Magistrate First Class Satish M said the day is meant to remind people about the value of voting and their duty as responsible citizens. He noted that National Voters' Day is dedicated to encouraging eligible citizens to enroll in the voter list and take part in elections.

The theme for this year, "My India, My Vote – Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy," highlights the role of every voter in shaping the nation's future. As part of the event, new voters were welcomed, and EPIC voter identity cards were symbolically distributed to youth, women, persons with disabilities, members of the third gender, and vulnerable tribal communities.

Tehsildar K. Raghavendra Rao, who presided over the function, administered the voter oath and urged everyone to vote honestly and without fear or influence.

Taluk SWEEP Committee President and Taluk Panchayat Executive Officer Ramanna Doddamani said voting is the system through which people choose leaders who work for public welfare. He stressed that selecting good representatives is the responsibility of every citizen. Officials, teachers, ASHA workers, Anganwadi staff, students, and community members took part in the rally and program. Organizers said such awareness drives help strengthen democracy by motivating more people to participate in free and fair elections. Participants carried placards, raised slogans on ethical voting, and pledged to encourage family members and neighbors to vote.

Justice Saraswati Devi Urges Citizens to Exercise Voting Duty

KOPPAL

Justice Saraswati Devi of the Family Court said voting is not just a right but a constitutional duty, urging citizens to participate actively in elections to strengthen democracy. She spoke at the 16th National Voters' Day program held at Sahitya Bhavan, Koppal, on Sunday.

The program was organized jointly by the Election Commission of India, Chief Electoral Officer Karnataka, District Electoral Officer, and District SWEEP Committee. Justice Devi emphasized that the strength of democracy depends on law and public trust, and voting is the main tool to maintain it. She called on women, youth, and first-time voters to exercise their right responsibly to uphold justice, equality, and constitutional values.

Zilla Panchayat CEO Varnit Negi, who presided over the event, highlighted that voting is the foundation of India's democracy.

He urged new voters to register their names and participate in elections to help build a strong and transparent democratic system.

VOTER PARTICIPATION APPEAL

Deputy Commissioner urges citizens to vote responsibly

GADAG

Deputy Commissioner C.N. Sridhar called on all eligible voters to take part in elections and use their constitutional right to vote, saying strong participation is key to building a strong nation and healthy democracy.

He spoke while inaugurating the National Voters' Day program at the District Administration auditorium on Sunday. Sridhar said voting is a golden chance for citizens to choose honest and capable leaders who can guide society in the right direction. He urged voters not to miss this opportunity.

National Voters' Day has been observed for the past several years to highlight the value of voting and to encourage young people who have turned 18 to register as voters. Sridhar said falling turnout in both towns and villages is a serious concern and must be reversed through awareness and responsibility.

District Legal Services Authority Member Secretary C.S. Shivanagoudra also addressed the gathering. He said democracy can survive only when people actively vote in every election. He warned that if participation keeps dropping, there may be calls in future to make voting compulsory.

Officials said the Election Commission is running many awareness drives to help youth enroll in the voter list and understand their role in the democratic process. Students at the event shared their thoughts on why voting matters.

During the program, voter oaths were administered, and booth-level officers, data entry staff, and student competition winners were honored. Several district officials, teachers, and students attended the event. Speakers encouraged families to discuss elections at home, support first-time voters, and treat polling day as a civic duty that shapes the future of the country.

QUICK READ

Kannamma assault video goes viral, sparks action

Hanur

A shocking incident was reported in G R Nagar village of Hanur taluk where a woman was tied to a pole and assaulted. The victim, identified as Kannamma, was allegedly attacked after a dispute over cattle grazing on farmland and damaging bean crops. Police said Selvi, Manju, and Angamuthu tied her during the argument and beat her. A video of the assault spread quickly online. Ramapur police arrested Manju and Angamuthu, filed a case, and began investigation. District Police Superintendent Muthuraj visited the village and inspected the scene. Authorities assured strict action and safety for local residents.

Non-resident Kannadigas in Kuwait loses ₹ 21 lakh in scam

Udupi

A shocking online scam has targeted a non-resident Kannadiga in Kuwait, leaving him cheated of over Rs 21 lakh. Shirvada Stanley Pereira, 57, saw a loan advertisement on the Telegram app and was added to a group where an unknown person promised a loan of Rs 75 lakh at 0.5% interest. The fraudster asked Stanley to pay Rs 5 lakh as tax first. Between December 23 and 31, Stanley transferred Rs 21,66,769 to accounts given by the suspect. Udupi Sen Police Station has registered a case, and investigation is underway to trace the accused and recover the money.

Support local artisans by buying handmade products: Minister

Launching 'Crafts of Malnad' website, he said traditional arts reflect the culture and identity of the region and must be passed on to the next generation

SHIVAMOGGA

School Education and District In-charge Minister S Madhu Bangarappa on Sunday launched the "Crafts of Malnad" website and called upon people to support local artisans by buying handmade products.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the Malnad Handicrafts Festival, Siridhanya Mela and Pushpasiri, the 63rd fruit and flower exhibition, held at Allama Prabhu Maidan in the city. The four-day event is jointly organised by the Zilla Panchayat, Horticulture Department and District Garden Art Association.

The minister said traditional arts reflect the culture and identity of the region and must be passed on to the next generation. He added that the government is thinking about introducing local art forms at the school level so children can learn and value their heritage from a young age.

The exhibition features handicrafts made by women from self-help groups, handloom sarees, food products made from millets, fruits, vegetables, and farm produce from different districts and states. Many visitors were seen appreciating the colourful displays and creative work of rural artisans.

Bangarappa said products made by women's self-help groups under the brand "Crafts of Malnad" have now been given an online platform to reach more customers. He suggested using short videos and QR codes to promote the website and said a state-level exhibition should also be held to popularise these crafts further.

> **The government is thinking about introducing local art forms at school level, so that children can learn and value their heritage from a young age.**
>
> —S Madhu Bangarappa, School Education Minister

He urged the public to visit the fair, buy local products and encourage artisans and women entrepreneurs. Several officials and public representatives were present during the launch ceremony. Organisers said the event also helps farmers, artists, and small producers find better markets and steady income opportunities across the Malnad region.

Police notice to Hindu event sparks outrage

The notice lists conditions on how the programme and speeches should be conducted

CHIKKAMAGALURU

A police notice issued ahead of the Hindu Samajotsava programme in Tarikere town has triggered strong reactions from Hindu activists and BJP leaders.

The event was organized as part of the 100th anniversary celebrations of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and included a public meeting and a procession.

According to organizers, the police sent a notice to event organizer Vikas Puttur and speakers, listing conditions on how the programme and speeches should be conducted. The notice warned speakers not to hurt sentiments of other communities or promote hatred or violence. It also asked organizers to ensure smooth traffic and public order during the procession.

BJP leaders criticized the notice, saying it referred to the Hate Speech Bill 2025, which has not yet become law. BJP state president B.Y. Vijayendra accused the Congress government of acting unfairly and trying to restrict Hindu gatherings. BJP MLA S. Suresh Kumar also questioned why notices were issued under a bill that is still pending approval.

Bajrang Dal leaders said the program aimed to spread awareness about Hindu history, values, and discipline. They alleged that the government was misusing legal provisions to stop peaceful programs. Activists warned they would strongly oppose such actions and continue organizing events within constitutional rights peacefully nationwide.

Suresh Poojary takes key KPCC legal role

BANTWAL

Notary and advocate Suresh Poojary has been elected as the Bantwal Assembly Constituency President of the KPCC Law, Human Rights and Right to Information Division, marking an important step in his public service career.

Poojary is a former president of the Bantwal Bar Association and is known locally for his legal practice and involvement in social issues. His appointment was approved by KPCC President D.K. Shivakumar and officially announced by Dakshina Kannada District Congress President Manoj Raj Rajeev. The order was issued on the directions of state division president C.M. Dhanunjaya.

Along with Poojary, several office bearers were named for the constituency unit. Umakar Nekkaraje has been appointed vice president, Muhammad Ghazzali Kolnadu as general secretary, and Vince Lett Pinto of Allipade as secretary. Nirmala Modankapu will serve as joint secretary, while Mohan Kumar from Nettarakere has been chosen as treasurer.

Party leaders said the new team is expected to strengthen legal awareness, protect human rights, and promote transparency through the Right to Information Act. The appointments were made following recommendations from former minister B. Ramanath Rai, Bantwal Block Congress President Balakrishna Anchan, and Panemangalore Block Congress President Chandrashekar Bhandari. Party workers expressed confidence that the leadership will actively address public issues and support citizens statewide.

Woman accuses relatives of stealing gold from her house

PADUBIDRI

A shocking house burglary has been reported in Hejamadi Kodi, where relatives allegedly stole gold and silver items worth lakhs of rupees. Rajini, who lives in Mumbai, filed a complaint at Padubidri Police Station stating that on the evening of January 21, her relatives—Rekha Kanchan, Hemalatha Kotian, Devdas Kanchan, Rohit Kotian, Dhanraj Kanchan, and Srish Kotian—broke into her house using a key maker. Stolen items included a gold Mangal Sutra, ring, chain worth Rs 6.65 lakh, silver bowl worth Rs 1.27 lakh, plates, lamps, religious paraphernalia, and Rs 12,000 in cash. Police have registered a case and launched an investigation.

Activist claims new voter list raises fears

UDUPI

Social activist Shivsunder on Sunday alleged that the ongoing voter data exercise is not a routine revision but an attempt to prepare a completely new voter list, raising concerns among citizens about documentation and eligibility.

Speaking at a public awareness meeting on voter list mapping organised by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind and other groups at the Jamia Masjid auditorium, he claimed that the process was placing the burden of proof on ordinary people. He said many citizens now feel they must prove they are Indians by producing documents.

Shivsunder argued that earlier, election officials visited homes to collect details, but now people are being asked to submit papers on their own. He expressed fear that poor families, migrants, and minorities could face difficulties if records are missing or names differ across documents.

He said democracy depends on giving voting rights to all citizens above 18 years of age and that no one should be excluded because of caste, religion, language, or region. He also alleged that booth-level officers were not properly visiting houses and were instead completing work from offices.

If people fail to submit forms or documents in time, their names could be removed from the voter list, he warned, urging residents to stay alert and verify their details.

Several community leaders attended the meeting and appealed to citizens to check their voter information and respond to official notices. Election authorities have not yet responded to the allegations made at the event.

Officials earlier said the exercise aims to improve accuracy, but detailed clarification on local implementation is still awaited. Citizens were advised to keep documents ready safely.

CT Ravi questions notice over speech law

CHIKKAMAGALURU

MLC C.T. Ravi on Sunday criticised the state government over a police notice issued to a speaker at a recent Hindu Samajotsava event, and questioned the use of a proposed hate speech law that he said has not yet come into force.

Speaking to reporters in Chikkamagaluru, Ravi referred to a notice served to Vikas Puttur, a keynote speaker at a programme held in Tarikere. Police had warned organisers and speakers to ensure that provisions of the Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Act, 2025, were not violated.

Ravi argued that the Act has not received the Governor's assent and therefore should not be enforced. He alleged that using such a law before it officially becomes valid amounts to restricting freedom of speech. He said freedom of expression is a constitutional right and asked whether the government was trying to silence certain voices. The BJP leader also accused the ruling Congress of misusing police powers. He claimed the move had created fear among some sections of society. Ravi said if authorities were serious about preventing violence or extremism, they should act firmly in such cases instead of targeting public speakers.

Meanwhile, Home Minister G. Parameshwar reportedly clarified that issuing notice under the proposed Act before it becomes law was a mistake. Opposition leaders have demanded clear guidelines for police action in such matters.

The incident has triggered a fresh political debate in the state over free speech, law enforcement, and the limits of preventive policing at public events. Legal experts say clarity is needed to avoid confusion and protect both public order and constitutional rights going forward.

Lakshmi Hebbalkar visits Udupi Sri Krishna Mutt

UDUPI

Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar, who also serves as Udupi District In-charge Minister, visited the famous Sri Krishna Math in Udupi on Saturday. The minister had the darshan of Lord Krishna and offered her prayers at the revered temple.

After the visit, she honored the Muttadhis of Shiroor Math, including Sri Sri Vedavardhana Theertha Swamiji, who holds the Paryaya Peetha. The minister also received blessings from the revered spiritual leader, praising his contribution to the religious and cultural life of the region.

The visit was attended by several prominent officials and leaders, including District Collector T.K. Swarup, District Guarantee Scheme Implementation Committee Chairman Ashok Kumar Kodavoor, and local leaders

Prasad Kanchan and Ramesh Kanchan. The gathering highlighted the close bond between political leaders and spiritual institutions in the district. The event was peaceful and marked by mutual respect and devotion.

Sports help ease stress, says top cop

MANGALURU

City Police Commissioner Sudhir Kumar Reddy said that taking part in sports activities can greatly reduce stress for professionals who work under constant pressure.

He was speaking after inaugurating the annual sports meet of journalists organised by the Dakshina Kannada District Working Journalists Association at the K.P.T. Grounds in Kadri on Sunday.

Reddy said both police personnel and media professionals often handle demanding duties, long hours, and unexpected situations. He noted that such work can affect mental and physical health if there is no time for relaxation.

Encouraging regular participation in games and outdoor activities, he said sports build teamwork, improve fitness, and refresh the mind. Even simple games, he added, can bring joy and help people return to their duties with better focus.

Association President Pushparaj B.N. presided over the function. K.P.T. Principal Harish Shetty, who attended as chief guest, wished the participants success and praised the effort to bring journalists together through sports.

Mangalore Press Club President P.B. Harish Rai, Patrika Bhavan Trust representative, and state executive member Srinivas Nayak Indaje were among those present. District General Secretary Rajesh K. Poojary, Vice President Wilfred D'Souza, and other office bearers also attended.

Executive Committee member Harish Motukana delivered the vote of thanks, while Vice President Mohammed Arif Padubidri compered the programme.

The event included friendly competitions aimed at strengthening unity and encouraging a healthy work life balance among journalists in the district. Organisers said such gatherings also create space for interaction, mutual support, and stress relief beyond newsroom duties. They expressed hope that more professionals would join similar activities in the future for better overall wellbeing.

LEND A HELPING HAND

Serving poor reflects god's presence: Bishop

UDUPI

Archbishop of Mangalore Diocese, Most Rev. Peter Paul Saldana, said that God's presence is visible in serving the poor. Speaking at the inauguration of the Trinity Medicare Service II Project on Sunday, he emphasized that helping the needy is a way to experience divine grace.

The project, led by Joseph Minajes Sastana with support from Frieda Rego and Janet Fernandes, provides dialysis treatment at a 50% discount to eligible poor patients in Dhaka district suffering from kidney failure. The event was part of the centenary program of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of the Diocese of Mangalore at Father Muller's Convention Center.

Bishop Saldana highlighted the Christian community's role in humanitarian service, noting that such work brings blessings and strengthens social support systems. Legislative Council member Ivan D'Souza praised the Vincent de Paul Society, observing that a community representing only 2.5 percent of the population serves the remaining 97.5 percent without discrimination based on caste or religion.

Joseph Minajes, founder of Trinity Medicare Service, urged people to live lives pleasing to God by helping those in need, describing service to humanity as the greatest gift one can offer.

The program was attended by several dignitaries, including Juan Manuel Buerego Gomes, International President of the Society of Vincent de Paul, Jude Mangala Raj, National President, Joseph Pandian, Special Ombudsman of the International General Council, and other key members and coordinators of the Society. Father Muller's Institutes Director Ven. Faustín Lucas Lobo and Spiritual Director Ven. Flavian Lobo were also present, along with youth and community representatives, celebrating a century of charitable service to the poor.

QUICK READ

Mangaluru cops warn people against lucky dip scams

Mangaluru

At an SC/ST grievance meeting, DCP Mithun of Mangaluru police warned against Lucky Dip and microfinance-type money collection schemes. A jeweller allegedly cheated a Dalit man of Rs 97,000 using this model. DCP Mithun clarified such schemes are illegal and urged citizens to provide information about any shops running them. Complaints should be filed with the consumer forum or police, and strict action will follow. He also advised victims of harassment in offices to approach internal committees or police rather than compromise. Officials highlighted the need to strengthen DCRE due to staff shortages.

KDA chairman to tour Chitradurga district on Feb 4

Chitradurga

Kannada Development Authority Chairman Dr Purushottam Bilimale will tour Chitradurga district on February 4, 2026. He will depart Davangere on February 3 at 5 pm and reach Chitradurga by 6 pm, staying at the Government Guest House. On February 4, he will attend the "Kannada Implementation Progress Review Meeting" at the District Collector's Office at 11 am, followed by a press conference at 1:30 pm. Later, he will visit Chitradurga Medical College and Research Institute at Rangavanahalli, Gudda for another review meeting at 3 pm before traveling to Haveri at 5 pm, said his personal secretary, T.S. Fanikumar.

HD Kumaraswamy hits out at DK brothers in Ramanagara

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy launched a scathing attack on Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and his brother DK Suresh in Ramanagara on Sunday.

RAMANAGARA

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy launched a scathing attack on Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and his brother DK Suresh in Ramanagara on Sunday.

He said, "DK Shi may say something to you, I will tell you he is a talker to us. Yes, I am a talker. He is a looter to him. No power is permanent. No one can drive me away from Ramanagara." He adding that his aims is to bring a "real Ramrajya" by 2028, emphasizing the importance of people's government over personal power.

Addressing comparisons with DK Shivakumar, Kumaraswamy said he has never earned a living by breaking rocks or grabbing land, highlighting the contrast between

himself and his political rivals.

He dismissed CM Siddaramaiah's past claim that JD(S) would never come to power, pointing out that despite such statements in 2018, his party continues to fight for public support.

Kumaraswamy also indicated his continued connection with Ramanagara, calling the district his home. He hinted at contesting from the area, saying his visit to Mandya was due to pressure from people there, but his final political struggles and service will be in Ramanagara.

His remarks came amid a tense political environment in Karnataka, with speculation growing about electoral battles in the upcoming 2028 assembly elections. HDK stressed that his focus remains on building a government that serves the people rather than personal ambitions.

HDK vows to protect farmers' land in Bidadi

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy expressed strong support for farmers' agitation against land acquisition in Bidadi. Speaking at an indefinite protest attended by villagers from Bhairamangala and Kanchuganahalli, he vowed not to allow even an inch of fertile agricultural land to be taken illegally. Moved to tears by women pleading to save their land, Kumaraswamy said, "Governments come and go, but people are eternal. I am with you. We will not break our unity." He criticized officials and state leaders for undervaluing farmers' land and warned that betrayal will not go unpunished. Farmers and local leaders joined the protest.

Rajiv Gowda threat case: Cops intensify manhunt

CHIKKABALLAPUR

They said anyone with information about his whereabouts can share details with the nearest police station

Rajiv Gowda, a local political worker accused of threatening officials of the Shidlaghatta City Municipal Council, is on the run, and police have launched an intensive search to arrest him, officials said on Sunday.

According to police, Gowda allegedly issued death threats to Municipal Council Commissioner Amrutha Gowda after civic authorities removed unauthorised banners in the town. A case was registered, and a court later rejected his anticipatory bail plea. Since then, he has reportedly gone into hiding.

Police sources said teams have been searching for him for nearly two weeks. Investigators believe he recently travelled to Mangaluru and abandoned his car near the railway station before fleeing to an unknown location. CCTV footage from railway stations, lodges, hotels and bus stands is now being checked to trace his movements.

The situation created tension in Shidlaghatta, with some residents expressing concern over the delay in his arrest. However, senior officers said legal procedures are being followed and efforts are on to secure him soon.

In another setback for Gowda, his party has reportedly suspended him following the controversy. His petition seeking to quash the FIR was also dismissed by the High Court, further tightening the legal net around him.

Police urged the public not to panic and appealed for cooperation. They said anyone with information about his whereabouts can share details with the nearest police station. Authorities assured that strict action will be taken based on the law once he is taken into custody. Officials added that special teams are coordinating with railway and transport authorities across states to prevent escape and ensure tracking of the suspect.

Video Lok Adalat helps elderly man get justice

RAMANAGARA

District and Sessions Judge M.H. Annayyavar said video conference hearings in Lok Adalats are making justice easier and faster for common people, especially the elderly and those who are unwell.

He spoke after a special Lok Adalat at the District and Sessions Court successfully settled a long-pending land case through video conferencing. An 80-year-old man, Moogappa, was able to take part in the hearing from a remote location because his poor health prevented him from traveling to court.

The case involved land in Rayasandra village of Kasaba Hobli in Kanakapura taluk. The Karnataka Housing Board had acquired 1 acre and 8 guntes of land belonging to Nagamma to form housing sites.

She had challenged the acquisition under the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. The matter had remained in court for eight years.

Nagamma later passed away and had no children. Her husband, Moogappa, became the legal heir. Compensation money had already been deposited in court. Through the video hearing, the judge explained the details clearly to Moogappa, and the dispute was settled peacefully.

Justice Annayyavar said many such cases are now being resolved through Lok Adalats using technology. This method saves time, travel, and legal costs for people. He added that Lok Adalats focus on compromise and friendly settlement, which benefits both sides.

He urged the public to make better use of Lok Adalats for quicker solutions. Several judges, lawyers, and officials were present during the special session, which highlighted how digital tools are improving access to justice for ordinary citizens across the district.

Gadag officer honoured for outstanding election service

GADAG

Gadag Additional Deputy Commissioner Dr. Duragesh K.R. received a prestigious state-level award for his exceptional service in election management, officials said on Sunday. The felicitation took place at Puttanna Chetty Hall in Bengaluru during the 16th National Voters' Day celebrations, highlighting the importance of transparent and efficient elections.

Dr. Duragesh was recognized as the best Assistant Election Officer at the Belgaum division level. The award was presented by Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot in the presence of Chief Election Commissioner V. Anbukumar and other senior officials. His dedication in managing elections, ensuring smooth polling, maintaining discipline, and raising voter awareness was widely appreciated.

"This recognition reflects our commitment to strengthen democracy and encourage citizen participation," said a senior official from the district administration. Dr. Duragesh's efforts in organizing peaceful elections and making the election process transparent earned him this special honour from the Election Commission.

The award has brought pride to the Gadag district administration and created a sense of joy among public service employees and citizens. Many praised Dr. Duragesh for setting high standards in election management and serving as an example for other officials.

The state-level recognition also highlights Gadag district's role in promoting fair and efficient elections, ensuring every voter has a voice, and encouraging awareness about the importance of voting. Officials hope such achievements will inspire younger officers and citizens to actively contribute to the democratic process.

Dr. Duragesh K.R.'s recognition serves as a reminder that dedicated public service strengthens democracy and builds trust between citizens and government institutions. The event was attended by election officials, senior administrators, and dignitaries who congratulated him for his contribution to electoral excellence.

Voting most powerful tool in democracy: Judge

CHITRADURGA

Principal District and Sessions Judge Rona Vasudeva said voting is the most powerful tool in a democracy and urged every citizen to use it with care and responsibility.

He spoke after inaugurating National Voters' Day celebrations organized by the Election Commission, District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and District Sweep Committee at Sri Shivsharan Madara Chennayya Sabha Bhavan on Sunday.

The judge said people must elect honest and capable leaders so that good laws are made and governance remains strong. He expressed concern that many citizens treat polling day as a holiday and travel instead of voting. Referring to recent elections, he noted that while turnout in some states was around 65 to 70 percent, a large number of people still stayed away. He reminded the public that some candidates have won by just one or two votes, proving that every single vote can decide the future. District Collector T. Venkatesh said ethical voting is important and people must not be influenced by money, caste, or religion. He added that over 14 lakh voters are registered in the district, but many did not vote in previous elections. He appealed for greater participation.

Zilla Panchayat CEO Dr. S. Akash said voting is both a right and a duty. He shared that he has voted in every election, even using postal ballots when away on work.

During the event, voter oaths were taken, booth officials were honored, and new voters received ID cards. A voter awareness rally was also flagged off in the city. Officials encouraged families, students, and workers to vote together and strengthen democracy through active participation.

Koppal DC Itnal honoured as top election officer

KOPPAL

Koppal Deputy Commissioner and District Election Officer Dr. Suresh B. Itnal has been awarded the Best District Election Officer Award by Governor Thawarchand Gehlot for his exemplary work in managing elections and electoral roll revisions.

The award was presented during the 16th National Voters' Day celebration held at Sri Puttanna Chetty Town Hall in Bengaluru on Sunday. Every year, the Election Commission of India recognizes the outstanding efforts of district election officers, additional officers, voter registration officers, assistant officers, BLO supervisors, and booth-level officers for their service in election administration.

Dr. Itnal's leadership in Koppal district was praised for ensuring smooth election operations and accurate voter registration. The Election Commission had announced the award list on January 19 as part of the 2025-26 National Voters' Day celebrations.

On the same occasion, Satishchandra, an assistant teacher at Hirebaganal Government Higher Primary School and Booth Level Officer of Polling Station No. 208 in the 64-Koppal Assembly Constituency, was honoured with the Best Booth Level Officer Award for his dedication and commitment.

Officials and participants lauded the recognition, highlighting the importance of diligent election administration in strengthening democratic processes. Dr. Itnal expressed gratitude for the award and reaffirmed his commitment to transparent and efficient election management in the district.

School in Kolar turns garbage dump yard

KOLAR

A government school in Kodikannur village of Kolar taluk has turned into a dumping ground, forcing more than 100 children to study in dirty and unsafe surroundings.

Heaps of garbage, broken concrete pieces, and waste from road works are lying inside the school campus. Thick bushes have grown around the building, and an old overhead water tank inside the premises is said to be in a dangerous condition. Villagers say it could collapse at any time.

The school stands on nearly two acres of land and has classes from Anganwadi to Class 8. Around 110 children come here every day. But instead of a clean playground, the children see piles of waste where they should be running and playing. An overhead water tank built under the Jal Jeevan Mission also stands inside the campus. Construction materials meant for the project have been left scattered on the ground. Parents worry that the sharp debris and open waste pose risks to children's safety and health.

Some classrooms are usable, but the surroundings paint a sad picture. Residents allege that people from the village itself are dumping garbage in front of the school boundary without fear. During the rainy season, stagnant water and foul smell make the situation worse.

Sudhakar to inaugurate Chikkaballapur R-Day celebration

CHIKKABALLAPUR

The district administration will celebrate the 77th Republic Day on January 26 at 9 am at Sir M Visvesvaraya District Stadium. The event will be inaugurated by Higher Education and District In-charge Minister Dr. MC Sudhakar and presided over by MLA P.E. Pradeep Easwar. Chief guests include MPs Dr. K. Sudhakar and M. Mallesh Babu, several MLAs, and chairpersons of key state authorities such as the Science, Educational, Cultural and Tourism Development Authority, Karnataka State Warehousing Corporation, and Karnataka State Mango Development Corporation. Government secretaries, department heads, and district officials will also attend the program.

SELF-RELIANCE AS KEY

Women can be empowered through training: MLA

KENGERI

MLA ST Somashekhar emphasized that women can achieve financial independence and self-reliance through skill development and entrepreneurship during the inauguration of a free sewing machine and beautification training center in Kengeri Kote ward of Yeshwantpur assembly constituency.

Speaking at the event, Somashekhar said, "The time when women were limited to housework is over. Women today are making their mark in business, industry, and other fields, achieving financial stability and recognition. The government has launched several programs to support women in self-employment, and they should make full use of these opportunities to strengthen their independence."

The training center aims to equip women with skills in sewing and beauty services, enabling them to start small businesses and earn a livelihood. Officials and organizers highlighted the role of such programs in promoting entrepreneurship and boosting women's confidence.

The event was attended by former Zilla Panchayat President Shivamadaya, Kengeri Block Congress President Mylasandra Nagaraj, Bengaluru West District Vice President Vajarahalli Shivanna, former ward and block leaders, and women's representatives including President Parvati. Participants appreciated the initiative, noting it provides practical tools and guidance for women to become self-reliant and economically empowered in the local community.

QUICK READ

Snowfall: Traffic on Srinagar-Jammu highway restored

Srinagar
The authorities said on Sunday that the Srinagar-Jammu national highway in J&K has been restored for traffic, and priority was being given to the stranded vehicles on the highway. The Srinagar-Jammu highway was closed due to heavy snowfall on the two sides of the Navyug tunnel on January 23. Airport officials said flight operation has also been resumed at Srinagar International Airport, and except for three flights cancelled due to NOTAM in Delhi, normal operation was resumed at the airport on Sunday. Traffic department officials said that the Srinagar-Leh highway, the Mughal Road and the roads leading through Sinthan and Razdan Pass were still closed.

WB SIR: EROs need clearances from special observers

Kolkata
The electoral registration officers (EROs) engaged in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in West Bengal will need to obtain final clearance from the special roll observers (SROs) before uploading the voters' names into the final electoral list. However, this restriction will only apply in cases of those voters who have appeared for hearings on claims and objections to the draft voters' list, after being identified as unmapped or in the logical discrepancy category. The names of voters in the draft voters' list, who have neither been categorised as unmapped nor as the logical discrepancy category, will be automatically included in the final voters' list.

Maha BJP leader's name in Bengal voter list, gets SIR notice

Kolkata
The name of a BJP district council candidate from Maharashtra has been found on the voter list for Ward No. 12 of Dubrajpur Municipality in West Bengal's Birbhum district. According to district officials, the BJP leader has been issued a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) hearing notice. This incident sparked political tension in the area on Sunday. It has been learned that the BJP leader, Ujjwala Burungle, is a resident of Nashik in Maharashtra. Her name is already included in the Maharashtra voter list in Nasik, and she was a BJP candidate in the 2026 District Council elections in that state.

'Vizhinjam Port benefits limited sans completion of allied projects'

Congress leader V D Satheesan says several works envisaged as integral components of the port remain incomplete.

KOCCHI

Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Kerala Assembly V D Satheesan on Sunday criticised the state government over delays in key infrastructure projects linked to the development of the Vizhinjam international seaport, saying the port cannot deliver its full economic and social benefits unless these projects are completed.

Satheesan said several crucial initiatives, including road and rail connectivity and the proposed outer ring road, were envisaged as integral components of the Vizhinjam port project but remain incomplete even after more than a decade. He pointed out that many of these projects were announced as early as 2014 with the aim of ensuring seamless movement of cargo and people, but have failed to materialise on the ground.

According to Satheesan, the lack of proper road and rail outreach has significantly reduced the port's potential to function as a major logistics and trans-shipment hub. Unless these related projects are completed, the Vizhinjam port development will not become fully beneficial for the state and its people, he said, adding that infrastructure bottlenecks could undermine the long-term economic gains expected from the port.

The Congress leader stressed that ports do not operate in isolation and must be supported by efficient connectivity networks. Without robust road and rail links, he argued, cargo movement will face delays, logistics costs will rise and Kerala may lose out to competing ports in neighbouring states. He also flagged the importance of the proposed outer ring road, which was intended to ease traffic congestion and provide smooth access to the port from different parts of the state.

Satheesan accused successive governments of failing to ensure time-bound implementation of these allied projects despite repeated assurances. He said the delays have raised concerns among stakeholders, including traders, exporters and local communities, who were expecting wider economic opportunities from the port's development.

The Vizhinjam port, located near Thiruvananthapuram, is considered one of Kerala's most ambitious infrastructure projects and is expected to play a key role in boosting maritime trade, employment and industrial growth. However, Satheesan warned that without completing the supporting infrastructure, the port's strategic advantages may not be fully realised.

2 die as bullet train bridge plate 'falls' in Gujarat

The incident occurred at a construction site linked to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train project.

SURAT

A tragic accident claimed the lives of a man and his young daughter after they were crushed by a massive metal plate that fell from an under-construction bridge near Surat in Gujarat on Sunday evening.

The incident occurred at a construction site linked to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train project, raising serious concerns over safety practices at large infrastructure worksites.

The bridge, which spans the Tapti River, was under active construction when the accident took place in Kathor village. According to officials, construction work was underway during the evening shift when a heavy metal plate suddenly broke loose from overhead machinery. The plate fell directly onto 35-year-old Mohsin Iqbal Sheikh and his nine-year-old daughter, Huma Mohsin Sheikh, who were fishing in the river below at the time.

Local residents who witnessed the incident described scenes of panic and chaos as people rushed to the spot in an attempt to help. However, the sheer weight of the iron plate meant the victims stood no chance of survival. Both father and daughter died on the spot, witnesses said.

Police personnel from the Uttran Police Station reached the site shortly after the accident and cordoned off the area to prevent further danger. A difficult recovery operation followed, during which the bodies were carefully extricated from beneath the fallen metal plate and heavy construction equipment. The bodies were later sent for post-mortem examination to determine the exact cause of death and document injuries.

The incident has triggered renewed scrutiny of safety measures at major construction projects. Police officials said a formal investigation has been launched to examine whether standard safety protocols were followed at the site. Contractors and project officials associated with the bridge construction are now under investigation.

We are probing whether safety regulations and equipment standards were strictly adhered to at the site, a police officer said. If negligence is established, strict legal action will be taken against the responsible contractors and officials.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project is one of India's most ambitious infrastructure initiatives, involving extensive construction across multiple districts. The deaths have intensified calls from local residents and labour groups for stricter enforcement of safety norms to prevent such fatal accidents in the future.

3 bodies recovered from gutted furniture store

HYDERABAD

At least three bodies were recovered on Sunday from the rubble of a furniture store that was gutted in a massive fire in Hyderabad, police said.

he victims' charred remains were found in the basement of the four-storey building, where the fire broke out on Saturday afternoon, triggering a prolonged and complex rescue operation.

Rescue teams shifted the bodies to Osmania General Hospital for post-mortem examination. Officials said the search operation was still underway for four other persons feared to be trapped inside the building. Rescue efforts have continued non-stop since Saturday afternoon, amid difficult conditions caused by thick smoke and structural damage.

Personnel from the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA), along with police and fire department teams, have been engaged in the operation. Fire services officials said smoke was still emanating from the basement, complicating access and slowing down rescue efforts.

The fire broke out around 1 p.m. on Saturday in a building housing Sai Vishwas Furniture Castle, located near Nampally Railway Station, a busy area in the heart of the city. Firefighters battled the blaze for nearly eight hours before bringing it under control. Skylifts and robotic equipment were deployed to tackle the fire and assist in the rescue, but dense smoke severely hampered visibility and movement inside the structure.

According to officials, it was local residents who first noticed flames and thick smoke billowing from the basement warehouse and alerted the fire department. Preliminary investigations suggest that a short circuit may have triggered the fire, though a detailed probe is underway to establish the exact cause.

Seven people, including two children, were feared trapped when the fire broke out. They were identified as Mohammed Imtiyaz (27), a worker at the store; Syed Habeeb (28), an auto trolley driver; Yadaiah, the store's watchman; his two children, 11-year-old Akhil and seven-year-old Praneet; and a woman identified as Beban Bee. Authorities said rescue teams are proceeding cautiously due to the risk of further collapse and lingering smoke.

WB minister Panja summoned for SIR hearing

KOLKATA

West Bengal Minister Shashi Panja has received a summons to appear at a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) hearing centre in Kolkata on Sunday, triggering a fresh political and administrative debate over the ongoing revision of the state's electoral rolls.

Panja, who currently serves as the state's Minister for Industries, Commerce and Enterprises, and Minister of State (independent charge) for Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, expressed surprise and annoyance at being called for the hearing.

According to Panja, her name appeared on the 2002 voter list of West Bengal, and she had duly submitted all required information through the enumeration form as part of the ongoing SIR exercise. Despite this, she was summoned for a hearing, which she believes is the result of technical shortcomings rather than any genuine discrepancy.

Speaking to reporters, Panja said the issue stemmed from flaws in the digital system used during the revision process. I am surprised. My name is on the list of 2002. But because the Election Commission rushed the SIR work, there are naturally many flaws in the BLOs' app and software. As a result, although my name is actually on the 2002 list, it's not showing in the app, she said. She added that while officials may have intended to resolve the issue separately, she decided to comply with the process like any other citizen.

I will go and register myself at the SIR hearing just like any other ordinary citizen, Panja said, underlining her willingness to follow due procedure despite her reservations.

The Special Intensive Revision of West Bengal's voter list began in October last year as part of an exercise to verify electoral data and correct errors ahead of future elections. After the completion and submission of enumeration forms, the process has now entered the hearing phase, during which voters are being summoned to clarify discrepancies. These include logical inconsistencies, mapping errors and technical issues related to digitised records. Panja is not the first prominent personality to be summoned during the SIR process.

MP police shines with 4 President's medals

NEW DELHI

A day ahead of Republic Day, the Centre announced the names of officers and personnel nationwide who have been selected for gallantry and service medals.

Among them, Madhya Pradesh stood out, with four officers receiving the President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM) and 17 personnel awarded the Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM). As announced by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, a press release said that their selection highlights the state's strong tradition of dedication, discipline, and public service.

The President's Medal for Distinguished Service was conferred upon Santosh Kumar Singh, Commissioner of Police; Mithelesh Kumar Shukla, Inspector General; Awadhesh Kumar Goswami, Deputy Inspector General; and Shiv Kumar Patel, Inspector.

These officers have been recognised for their years of outstanding contribution to policing, leadership, and commitment to public safety.

The Medal for Meritorious Service was awarded to a wide spectrum of officers and ranks, reflecting the depth of talent and dedication within the Madhya Pradesh Police.

The awardees include Krishnaveni Desavatu, Inspector General; Manoj Kumar Rai, Superintendent of Police; Gitesh Kumar Garg, Superintendent of Police; Durgesh Kumar Rathore, Superintendent of Police; Praveen Singh, Inspector/ARMR; Rajendra Prasad Gupta, Inspector/ARMR; Nidhi Shrivastava, Inspector/ARMR; Sanjay Singh Thakur, Deputy Superintendent of Police; Shaffali Takalkar, Inspector/ARMR; Shriram Mishra, Head Constable; Shushil Kumar Choubey, Constable; Prem Kishore Vyas, Sub Inspector; Umrao Prasad Jatav, Sub Inspector; Mahendra Singh Negi, Assistant Sub Inspector; Santosh Mehra, Assistant Sub Inspector; Ravindra Mishra, Constable; and Raju Gurane, Inspector/ARMR.

According to the press release, a total of 982 personnel from police, fire, home guard, civil defence, and correctional services across India were honoured with gallantry and service medals this year. These awards are conferred annually on Republic Day and Independence Day to recognise acts of gallantry, distinguished service, and meritorious contributions in maintaining law and order and safeguarding citizens.

Security beefed across J&K ahead of Republic Day

SRINAGAR

Security across Jammu and Kashmir has been placed on maximum alert ahead of the country's 77th Republic Day, officials said on Sunday, citing the need for heightened vigilance amid prevailing security concerns. The main function will be held on Monday at the M.A. Stadium in Jammu, where Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha will hoist the national flag and take the salute at the ceremonial parade. In Srinagar, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary will preside over celebrations at the Bakshi Stadium.

March-past contingents will include personnel from the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Fire and Emergency Services, Disaster Management teams, Home Guards and schoolchildren. Similar functions will be organised at district headquarters across all 20 districts.

Cultural programmes showcasing regional heritage, along with tableaux highlighting development and progress, will follow the ceremonies. Multi-layered security, including intelligence networks, electronic surveillance, drones, checkposts, frisking, and vehicle searches, has been deployed. The celebrations are observed in the shadow of the November 10, 2025 terror attack near Delhi's Red Fort that killed 12 civilians and injured 32.

DAWN OF NEW ERA

Tejashwi Yadav appointed RJD national working president

PATNA

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) on Sunday announced a significant leadership change, appointing Yadav family scion Tejashwi Yadav as the party's national working president. The move, made by party supremo Lalu Prasad Yadav, is seen as an effort to give the party a younger face and sharpen its political edge in Bihar's competitive political landscape.

The announcement was made during the inaugural session of the RJD's national executive meeting. Lalu Prasad Yadav formally handed over the appointment letter to his son in the presence of senior party leaders. The meeting was also attended by former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi, underscoring the significance of the occasion for the party's first family.

Confirming the development, the RJD said in a post on X: Dawn of a New Era! Shri Tejashwi Yadav Ji has been appointed as the National Executive President of Rashtriya Janata Dal. Party leaders described the decision as a strategic step to energise the organisation and connect more strongly with younger voters.

Tejashwi Yadav, the youngest son of Lalu Prasad Yadav and Rabri Devi, has long been regarded as the de facto leader of the RJD after his father, despite having an elder brother, Tej Pratap Yadav. With Tej Pratap having been expelled from the party last year, Tejashwi is now firmly positioned to carry forward the family's political legacy and shape the party's future direction.

Before entering active politics, Tejashwi was a budding cricketer and was associated with the Delhi Daredevils in the Indian Premier League. However, over the past decade, he has steadily built his political profile. In the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections, Tejashwi led the RJD to emerge as the single largest party in the state assembly.

Following the elections, the RJD briefly shared power in Bihar alongside Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, further cementing Tejashwi Yadav's status as a key political figure in the state. Party insiders believe his elevation as national working president will help consolidate leadership, strengthen organisational discipline and prepare the RJD for upcoming electoral battles.

With this appointment, the RJD has signalled a clear generational shift, placing its future firmly in the hands of Tejashwi Yadav as it seeks to remain a central force in Bihar politics.

QUICK READ

Security beefed up at Godhra rly station after track blast

Panchmahal

A comprehensive security search was conducted at Godhra railway station in Gujarat on Sunday, a day after a blast occurred near Sirhind railway station in Punjab's Fatehgarh Sahib district. The operation was undertaken as a precautionary measure following the incident in Punjab, with railway and security agencies stepping up checks at key stations to ensure passenger safety. The search operation at Godhra was carried out between 12 noon and 1 pm under the supervision of senior officers of the Government Railway Police (GRP) and the Railway Protection Force (RPF).

Economic focus dominates Delhi CM's maiden R-Day speech

New Delhi

In her maiden Republic Day speech at Chhatrasal Stadium, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday recounted her government's achievements in fields like health, transport, education, development, pollution control and ease of doing business, stressing the need to rebuild the Capital as an economic nerve centre. Those who looted Delhi time and again have themselves been erased from history. But... Delhi has risen again each time, standing even taller and prouder. And once again, Delhi has risen to reclaim its lost dignity, to shape its new future, she said at the Delhi government's official Republic Day function that included unfurling of the National Flag.

16 police officers to receive President's Medals on R-Day

Gandhinagar

The Union Home Ministry on Sunday announced that 16 officers and personnel of the Gujarat Police Force will be conferred with police service medals on the occasion of Republic Day on January 26, in recognition of their distinguished and meritorious service. The awards will be presented by the President Droupadi Murmu as part of the national Republic Day honours. As per the official list released, two senior officers from the Gujarat cadre of the Indian Police Service (IPS) have been selected for the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM), one of the highest service honours in policing.

Vijay vows zero corruption, calls TN poll a 'democratic war'

'Ordinary people were under immense stress, having been repeatedly let down by unfulfilled promises and failed changes'

CHENNAI

Actor-turned-politician Vijay on Sunday made a strong pitch for clean politics, declaring that he would never indulge in corruption as he urged the cadre of his TVK to prepare for what he described as a decisive democratic war in the forthcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. Addressing a meeting of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) functionaries, Vijay asserted that he would not compromise on integrity under any circumstances.

"I will never commit corruption. I will not touch even a single rupee. There is no need for me to do so," he said, reiterating that even a drop of corruption would not be tolerated in his political journey.

Responding to speculation about pressure being exerted on him, Vijay said such pressure did not affect him personally. "Do you think there is pressure on us? Never. I am not someone who bends under pressure," he asserted.

However, he added that ordinary people were under immense stress, having been repeatedly let down by unfulfilled promises and failed changes. People are under pressure because they were betrayed by false assurances, he said. Clarifying his political intent, Vijay stated that he did not enter politics to become subservient to anyone.

I did not come into politics to be a slave, he said, adding that established political forces had consistently underestimated him for decades. For 30 years, they have been looking down on us. But the people are evaluating us correctly, he noted. Launching a sharp attack on rival parties, Vijay alleged that the AIADMK had surrendered directly to the BJP, while branding the DMK a destructive force.

He urged party workers to strengthen public trust in the TVK by adhering strictly to principles and discipline. I will not bow to any manipulation or pressure. If someone commits a mistake, there must be fear that no one will be spared, he warned. Calling for unity within the party, Vijay appealed to cadres to work together selflessly. Do not compromise our politics for anyone or for anything, he said.

TN BJP appeals for ethical, responsible voting

CHENNAI: Marking National Voters' Day 2026, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) launched a statewide campaign in Tamil Nadu, urging citizens to exercise their franchise responsibly and work towards 100 per cent voter turnout in the forthcoming Assembly elections. The party said sustained voter education and electoral reforms were essential for strengthening democracy and ensuring people-centric governance.

In a statement, Tamil Nadu BJP spokesperson A.N.S. Prasad said National Voters' Day first observed in 2011 has played a key role in raising awareness about voting rights, electoral integrity and the importance of informed choices.

He recalled that within a few years of focused voter education, the country witnessed a decisive shift in national politics, culminating in the 2014 general election that brought the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance to power.

Prasad said the 2026 observance has gained added significance in view of the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, which he described as a rigorous exercise to remove bogus entries and empower genuine voters.

According to him, the SIR has restored public confidence in the electoral process by ensuring that only eligible citizens decide election outcomes. The BJP leader alleged that criticism directed at the Election Commission of India, the Prime Minister and the party over voter-roll reforms was politically motivated and had been countered by public support for clean elections.

He argued that similar awareness in Tamil Nadu would help voters reject corruption, dynastic politics and anti-people alliances in the 2026 polls.

Highlighting the theme for National Voters' Day 2026 My India, My Vote, with the slogan Citizen at the Heart of Indian Democracy Prasad said BJP workers across the state were organising outreach programmes, especially targeting first-time voters and youth. These initiatives include awareness meetings, voter enrolment drives and discussions on the role of ethical voting in development and welfare.

Vote with integrity to strengthen democracy: Telangana Governor

He appealed to citizens to vote responsibly, stressing awareness as the foundation of democracy.

HYDERABAD

Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma on Sunday called upon citizens to actively and responsibly exercise their right to vote, asserting that democratic institutions remain strong only when voters participate with awareness, integrity and a sense of civic duty. He was addressing the state-level celebrations of the 16th National Voters' Day, held to underline the importance of informed and ethical participation in the democratic process.

Speaking on the occasion, the Governor said the theme of this year's National Voters' Day, My India, My Vote, aptly reflected the core principle of Indian democracy, that citizens are central to governance and decision-making. National Voters' Day is observed annually on January 25 to mark the establishment of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Referring to Article 324 of the Constitution, Governor Varma said the independence and impartiality of the ECI are vital to ensuring free and fair elections in a vast, diverse and populous country like India. He emphasised that strong constitutional institutions play a crucial role in preserving public faith in the electoral system.

Quoting B R Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi, the Governor noted that political democracy can endure only when it is supported by social democracy and ethical participation by voters. He said informed voting, respect for democratic values and social harmony are essential for the long-term health of the republic.

Governor Varma also praised Telangana's election administration for promoting inclusiveness and transparency through several voter-friendly initiatives. These include assured minimum facilities at polling stations, home voting for eligible voters such as senior citizens and persons with disabilities, and the effective use of modern technology to improve electoral management.

He lauded officials for the peaceful and efficient conduct of the Jubilee Hills Assembly bye-election, highlighting the coordinated deployment of police personnel and the use of drone surveillance to maintain law and order on polling day. Chief Electoral Officer of Telangana C Sudharsan Reddy briefed the gathering on voter enrolment and electoral preparedness in the state.

CPI(M) reaffirms support for Sabarimala gold theft probe

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Sunday reiterated its full support for the ongoing investigation into the Sabarimala gold theft case, firmly rejecting allegations by the Congress that the Kerala government was attempting to derail the probe by influencing the Special Investigation Team (SIT) appointed by the court.

Addressing the media, CPI(M) State Secretary M V Govindan said the party's stand on the issue had remained unchanged since the beginning. We have supported the investigation in full. Our position has not changed since the demand for a Special Investigation Team was first raised. Whoever is found guilty must face action, without any exception, he said, stressing that the party had nothing to hide.

Govindan referred to developments dating back to 2017 to underline the gravity

of the case linked to the Sabarimala Temple. He recalled that a flagpole at the temple was allegedly declared termite-infested under false pretences and subsequently replaced. Following this, the vachivahanam—a sacred ceremonial idol placed atop the temple masthead—was allegedly handed over illegally to the temple's tantri.

According to Govindan, the sacred object was later recovered from the tantri's residence, raising serious concerns about misappropriation of temple property. These incidents formed the basis for the court ordering an investigation spanning the past 20 years, he said, adding that the scope of the probe itself reflected the seriousness of the allegations.

Rejecting claims by Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan that the investigation was being mishandled, Govindan said such allegations were unfounded and premature. He pointed out that the probe was being closely monitored by the Kerala High Court, leaving no room for political interference.

The investigation is still ongoing. There is absolutely no justification in blaming the state government at this stage, he said.

Govindan also accused the Congress of indulging in selective outrage. He referred to reports of the prime accused having met Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, and said the opposition had failed to give a clear explanation regarding that meeting.

Prof killed over train alighting dispute, suspect held

MUMBAI

The Borivali Government Railway Police (GRP) on Sunday arrested 27-year-old daily wage labourer Omkar Eknath Shinde, who allegedly attacked 33-year-old Alok Kumar Singh after a minor argument over alighting at Malad railway station. Shinde was caught in the Kurar area within 12 hours of the incident. He has been arrested under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and further investigation is underway. Singh, a math and statistics professor at NM College in Vile Parle, boarded a Borivli-bound local from Vile Parle. Around 6.30 pm, as the train reached Malad, a dispute broke out between him and Shinde, a metal polishing labourer, while alighting. Shinde stabbed Singh in the stomach, got off the train, and fled. Despite his injuries, Singh alighted but collapsed on the platform. He was taken to Babasaheb Ambedkar Hospital in Kandivli, where he was pronounced dead. CCTV footage showed a man in a white shirt and blue jeans running across the foot overbridge after the attack.

Himanta slams Congress over Rangiya meet

GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the Indian National Congress following a recent political gathering in Rangiya, alleging that the event exposed disorder within the party and highlighted its growing disconnect from Assam's culture, traditions and social values.

Speaking to reporters, the Chief Minister said he was initially unaware of the meeting but was later shown photographs and video footage from the event. He claimed the visuals left him surprised and did not reflect the conduct of a structured or disciplined political programme. The visuals I saw did not resemble an organised political meeting. What was evident was confusion and chaos rather than clarity and discipline, Sarma said.

According to the Chief Minister, such scenes point to deeper issues within the Congress, which he alleged has increasingly lost touch with the cultural ethos and social sensitivities of Assam. He argued that political activities which fail to respect local traditions and values raise serious concerns about maintaining social harmony in the state.

Sarma stressed that Assam's political discourse should be firmly rooted in respect for the state's cultural identity and collective values. He warned that political approaches which, in his view, ignore these fundamentals could have long-term implications for societal cohesion and harmony. Emphasising the need for democratic vigilance, the Chief Minister said defeating the Congress in elections was essential not only for Assam but also in the broader national interest. He urged citizens to remain alert and exercise their democratic rights responsibly to safeguard the state's cultural integrity and social fabric.

UPROOTING MAOISTS

CRPF dismantles suspected Maoist arms factory

RAIPUR

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has achieved a major operational success by dismantling a suspected Maoist arms and explosives manufacturing unit along the Sukma–Bijapur border in Chhattisgarh, officials said on Sunday.

The operation is being described as a significant blow to insurgent infrastructure in one of the country's most sensitive Naxalite-affected regions.

Acting on precise intelligence inputs, CRPF teams launched a coordinated raid in the dense forests of Palaguda, an inaccessible area located near the border of Sukma and Bijapur districts. During the search, security forces uncovered two large concealed dumps at separate locations,

believed to have been used by Maoists for the manufacture and storage of arms and explosives.

The operation was carried out by the 150th Battalion of the CRPF, with joint teams drawn from F/150 Company, led by Cheetah Roshan Kumar Jha, and G/150 Company, led by Cheetah Ajay Kumar. The forces first cordoned off the forested terrain and then conducted an intensive search operation, which ultimately led to the discovery of the hidden caches.

Officials said the raid was conducted under the direct supervision of Commandant Tiger Rakesh Chandra Shukla, ensuring careful planning, coordination and execution. Large quantities of materials used in the fabrication of weapons and explosives were seized during the operation, effectively crippling the Maoists' capability to carry out major violent acts in the region.

Security officials revealed that intelligence inputs suggested Maoist cadres were preparing for a significant incident in the Palaguda forest area. The timely dismantling of the arms and explosives dumps is believed to have thwarted these plans, preventing a potentially deadly attack.

Senior CRPF officers described the operation as a surgical strike against Naxalite activities and underscored the importance of proactive intelligence-based actions in maintaining peace and security. They noted that the success of the mission highlights the preparedness and operational readiness of the forces, especially during sensitive periods such as Republic Day.

The discovery and destruction of the Maoist infrastructure is being hailed as a major achievement in the ongoing counter-insurgency campaign in Chhattisgarh.

Hybrid marijuana cache seized, 4 arrested

AHMEDABAD

Hybrid marijuana, with an estimated value of Rs 12.50 crore, was seized at Ahmedabad's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport and four passengers arrested on Sunday, officials said, uncovering what is believed to be an international drug smuggling operation using the air route to bring contraband into India. The seizure followed specific intelligence inputs received by Customs and police authorities about the possible smuggling of narcotics from Southeast Asia.

Acting on the information, officials carried out intensive screening of passengers arriving on a flight from Bangkok. During the checks, suspicious material was detected in the baggage of four passengers, leading to a detailed inspection.

On examination, a large quantity of banned high-grade hybrid marijuana was recovered. The contraband was concealed in plastic packets, and its estimated international market value is around Rs 12.50 crore, a senior Customs official said.

Hybrid marijuana is known to be significantly more potent and expensive than conventional cannabis and is prohibited under Indian law. All four passengers were detained at the airport and subsequently placed under arrest.

According to officials, preliminary interrogation revealed that one of the accused is a resident of Vadodara, while the remaining three are natives of Punjab.

Investigators are now probing the purpose for which the consignment was brought into Gujarat and are also working to identify other individuals involved in the supply chain.

Initial investigation indicates that the drugs were intended for distribution in major Indian cities, where there is a growing demand for such substances. We are examining travel records, financial transactions and possible international links to trace the larger network, a police officer said.

A case has been registered under the relevant provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. The seized narcotics have been sent for forensic analysis, and further investigation is underway. Officials said coordination with central agencies has also been initiated to determine whether the accused have links with international drug syndicates.

QUICK READ

Climber Alex Honnold scales 101-floor skyscraper without

Taiwan

American climber Alex Honnold has successfully scaled a Taiwan skyscraper without a rope, harness or safety equipment. The building, named Taipei 101 for the number of its floors, stands at 508m (1,667ft) of steel, glass and concrete and is designed to resemble a stick of bamboo. Honnold is renowned for being the first person to climb El Capitan, the vertical granite cliff in California's Yosemite national park - also without ropes or safety gear. The climb was originally set to take place but was delayed by wet weather. His ascent in Taiwan's capital was streamed live on Netflix, which said there would be a delay on the live feed should the worst happen.

Greenland hit by power outage

Nuuk

Greenland's capital, Nuuk, has faced a widespread power outage after strong winds triggered a transmission problem, the state utility said, as the Arctic island contends with the fallout from the crisis fuelled by United States President Donald Trump's territorial designs. On Sunday, social media users began reporting a sudden blackout that occurred at the same time, Greenlandic newspaper Sermitsiaq reported. The utility company posted on Facebook that gusty winds at the main Buksefjord hydroelectric power plant had caused a line error on our transmission line and that they were working to restore power with an emergency plant.

Trump Threatens 100% Tariff over Potential China Trade Deal

Donald Trump warned Canada of sweeping tariffs amid tensions over China ties and shifting global trade alliances dynamics

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump has issued a stark warning to Canada, threatening to impose a 100% tariff on all Canadian goods entering the United States if Ottawa proceeds with a trade deal with China. The threat was delivered through a post on Trump's social media platform, Truth Social, where he cautioned that any such agreement would trigger immediate and severe economic consequences.

In his post, Trump claimed that if Canada were to make a deal with China, it would be hit with a 100% Tariff against all Canadian goods and products coming into the U.S.A. However, the former president did not specify the nature of the deal he was referring to, leaving room for ambiguity and speculation.

The warning comes shortly after Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney announced a strategic partnership with China, which included agreements to resolve and reduce certain tariffs.

Interestingly, Trump had initially described Canada's engagement with China as a good thing when the partnership was first announced. Relations between the two countries have since deteriorated, particularly following Carney's remarks at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where he said the US-led global order had been ruptured. Carney also encouraged other middle powers to cooperate against economic coercion by larger nations, comments widely interpreted as a veiled reference to Washington.

Trump responded sharply the following day, asserting that Canada lives because of the United States, a statement that further inflamed diplomatic tensions. He also withdrew an invitation for Canada to participate in his newly announced Board of Peace, signaling a deepening rift.

Trump escalated his rhetoric, accusing Canada of potentially acting as a drop-off port for Chinese goods destined for the US market, an allegation he said would not be tolerated. If Carney thinks he is going to make Canada a 'Drop Off Port' for China… he is sorely mistaken, Trump wrote.

Indonesia resumes search for about 80 missing people

JAKARTA

Indonesian rescuers have resumed searching for some 80 people still missing in a deadly landslide, after the mission coordinator said operations had to be suspended overnight due to harsh weather. The death toll from landslide in a residential area of West Java province rose to 10 on Sunday, according to state-run media, announcing three more deaths.

Triggered by heavy rain, the landslide barrelled into villages in West Java's West Bandung early, burying residential areas and forcing dozens of people to evacuate their homes.

German authorities arrested a Lebanese national in Berlin over alleged Hamas links and suspected plans to target institutions

Germany Arrests Lebanese Suspect Over Alleged Hamas Membership

BERLIN

German police have arrested a Lebanese national on suspicion of being a member of Hamas and planning attacks on Jewish and Israeli institutions in Europe, federal prosecutors said. The suspect, identified only as Mohammad S in line with German privacy laws, was detained at Brandenburg Airport after arriving from Beirut.

According to Germany's federal prosecutors, Mohammad S is accused of helping to procure around 300 rounds of ammunition in August 2025 and of being involved in an alleged plot to carry out attacks targeting Jewish and Israeli-linked sites. Investigators believe the suspected activities formed part of a broader Hamas-linked network operating in Europe.

The suspect is expected to be brought before a federal judge in the coming days, who will decide whether he should be placed in pretrial detention. German security authorities have not disclosed further operational details, citing the ongoing investigation and security concerns.

Hamas, which previously controlled the Gaza Strip but has been severely weakened by Israeli military operations, is designated a terrorist organisation by Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel and many other countries. The group carried out a major cross-border attack on Israel in October 2023, killing about 1,200 people and taking more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli authorities.

Since that attack, Israel has launched an extensive military campaign in Gaza. According to Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry, more than 70,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli military action since the conflict escalated, figures that cannot be independently verified but are widely cited by international organisations.

German prosecutors also allege that Mohammad S colluded with Abed Al G, one of three suspected Hamas members arrested in Germany last October over plans to attack Jewish and Israeli institutions. Those three suspects were reportedly detained while meeting in Berlin for what investigators described as a weapons handover. Two of the men are German nationals, while the third, like Mohammad S, is from Lebanon.

Myanmar Votes in Final Election Round

NAYPYIDAW

Polls opened in Myanmar on Sunday for the third and final round of a controversial general election, with a military-backed party poised for victory. Voting began at 6am local time in 60 townships, including Yangon and Mandalay, officials said.

The polls have been condemned by opposition figures, rights groups and international observers, who argue the process is neither free nor fair. Critics say the vote is intended to legitimise continued military rule nearly five years after generals ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in a 2021 coup.

The takeover plunged the country into a civil war that has killed thousands and displaced more than 3.5 million people.

Suu Kyi remains in detention, while her National League for Democracy has been dissolved along with other opposition parties. With major rivals removed, the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) has dominated the process.

Election commission figures show the USDP has secured 193 of 209 lower-house seats and 52 of 78 in the upper house. The military also holds 166 unelected seats, giving it decisive influence now.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

	6		8		7		3	
5		3		1			7	
8			2		3	6		9
	3	8		7			5	
7			6		8	9		3
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5	2	1	7	6	4	8	9	3
3	4	8	9	1	5	2	6	7
9	7	6	3	2	8	1	4	5
8	5	7	4	9	6	3	1	2
6	3	2	1	8	7	9	5	4
1	9	4	5	3	2	6	7	8
4	8	9	2	7	1	5	3	6
7	6	3	8	5	9	4	2	1
2	1	5	6	4	3	7	8	9

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

Over 4,000 US Flights Cancelled as Historic Winter Storm Prompts Emergency Declarations

WASHINGTON

More than 4,000 flights were cancelled across the United States as a powerful winter storm swept across the country, disrupting travel, cutting power and threatening to paralyse large parts of the eastern region. The storm had already left more than 230,000 customers without electricity as far west as Texas, with conditions expected to worsen through Sunday and into the coming week.

Forecasters warned that a dangerous mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain, combined with plunging temperatures, would impact the eastern two-thirds of the nation. Some areas are expected to see heavy snowfall and significant ice accumulation, creating hazardous travel conditions and increasing the risk of further power outages and infrastructure damage.

Airports nationwide were heavily affected as airlines pre-emptively grounded flights to protect passengers. Major hubs in the Midwest and along the East Coast reported widespread delays and cancellations, stranding thousands of travellers during a busy weekend period. Transportation officials cautioned that disruptions could last several days as crews clear runways and restore normal operations.

Calling the storm historic, US President Donald Trump approved federal emergency disaster declarations for 12 states, including South Carolina, Virginia and Georgia, allowing faster deployment of federal aid.

First Russia–Ukraine–US Peace Talks End without Breakthrough

Initial trilateral peace talks in Abu Dhabi concluded without progress, even as air strikes and counterattacks escalated hostilities

ABU DHABI

The first three-way peace talks involving Russia, Ukraine and the United States have concluded in Abu Dhabi without any apparent breakthrough, against the backdrop of intensified fighting on the ground. The two-day negotiations, the first such trilateral meeting since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, ended amid fresh waves of violence and renewed accusations from both sides.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky indicated that further discussions could take place as early as next week, signalling cautious optimism despite the lack of tangible outcomes. An unnamed American official confirmed that a new round of talks is scheduled to begin on February 1, once again in Abu Dhabi, suggesting that diplomatic channels remain open.

The talks concluded after Russian air strikes reportedly targeted Ukraine's already badly damaged energy infrastructure. Ukrainian authorities said the attacks killed at least one person and injured 35 others, further straining civilian life during the winter months. Energy facilities have been a recurring target in the conflict, leaving large parts of the country vulnerable to power outages and shortages.

Russia, meanwhile, accused Ukraine of attacking an ambulance in territory under Ukrainian control, claiming the strike killed three medics. Moscow also reported a Ukrainian missile attack on energy infrastructure in the Belgorod region, close to the Ukrainian border. Kyiv has not publicly commented on these specific allegations.

In a post on X, Zelensky said the central focus of the discussions was the possible parameters for ending the war. He emphasised the importance of US involvement, adding that he highly valued the understanding of the need for American monitoring and oversight of the process of ending the war and ensuring genuine security. According to Zelensky, all three sides agreed to report back to their respective capitals and coordinate further steps with their leaders.

An American official described the agreement to continue talks as a good sign, noting that a lot of work had been completed during the two days of negotiations, even if no immediate results were announced.

Federal agents in Minneapolis shoot dead US citizen Alex Pretti

MINNEAPOLIS

Federal agents in the United States have shot dead another person in Minneapolis amid an immigration crackdown, authorities said, spurring protests and new calls for President Donald Trump to pull heavily armed officers out of the city in Minnesota State immediately.

Minneapolis police chief Brian O'Hara told reporters that a 37-year-old man died in hospital after being shot multiple times. The Minneapolis resident was a US citizen, O'Hara said.

The man's parents identified him as Alex Pretti, an intensive care unit nurse. The incident took place amid a weeks-long deployment of immigration enforcement and other federal agents to Minneapolis, where they have been carrying out raids as part of Trump's anti-immigration push.

It also happened amid widespread daily protests in Minneapolis since the January 7 shooting of 37-year-old Renee Good, who was killed when an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer fired into her vehicle.

Federal agents also shot a Venezuelan man in a separate incident last week in the city. This long ago stopped being a matter of immigration enforcement, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz said during a separate news conference in Saint Paul, the state's capital and Minneapolis's twin city.

It's a campaign of organised brutality against the people of our state. And today, that campaign claimed another life, said Walz, pledging that Minnesota would handle the investigation into the killing. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said a US Border Patrol agent shot dead a person who had a handgun and resisted attempts to be disarmed.

DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said the agent fired defensive shots after a man with a handgun approached them and violently resisted when officers tried to disarm him.

CEASEFIRE EXTENDED

Syria Extends Ceasefire with Kurdish-Led SDF

DAMASCAS

A ceasefire between Syria's military and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces has been extended by 15 days, officials confirmed, just hours after the initial four-day truce expired. The extension, announced late is aimed at supporting a United States-led operation to transfer prisoners affiliated with ISIL from detention facilities previously under SDF control.

Syria's Defence Ministry said the renewed ceasefire came into effect at 11pm local time (20:00 GMT) and was designed to facilitate the safe and orderly relocation of ISIL detainees. The SDF separately confirmed the extension, saying in a statement that the agreement contributes to de-escalation, the protection of civilians, and the creation of the necessary conditions for stability during a tense and uncertain period.

The announcement brought a measure of relief across Syria, which has been on edge since clashes erupted earlier this month between government forces and the SDF. The fighting was triggered by disputes over the future status of the SDF and its proposed integration into the national army, a long-standing and sensitive issue in post-war Syria.

Over the past two weeks, the Syrian military has made significant territorial gains, pushing the SDF out of Aleppo and seizing large areas of northern and eastern Syria. These advances placed strategically important oilfields, hydroelectric dams and several detention facilities holding ISIL fighters and their families under government control. Among them was al-Aqtan prison in Raqqa province, a site previously overseen by the SDF.

As government forces closed in on the SDF's remaining strongholds, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa unexpectedly announced a ceasefire. Under its terms, the SDF was given to lay down arms and submit a plan for integration into Syria's military structure, or face a resumption of fighting. While the extension has temporarily halted large-scale hostilities, analysts caution that the underlying disagreements remain unresolved.

QUICK READ

67 pc HNIs and UHNIs firmly bullish on India's growth

NEW DELHI

Nearly two-thirds of India's high net-worth individuals (HNIs) and ultra high net-worth individuals (UHNIs) remain confident about the country's economic future, even as global uncertainties continue to weigh on markets, a report said on Sunday. According to the Luxury Residential Outlook Survey 2026 by India Sotheby's International Realty (ISIR), around 67 per cent of wealthy investors are bullish on India's growth story over the next 12 to 24 months. The survey reflects steady optimism about the economy, with 72 per cent of respondents expecting India's GDP growth to stabilise in the 6 to 7 per cent range in FY27.

Union Budget, Fed meeting and earnings to drive stock market

MUMBAI

The Indian stock market is expected to remain volatile in the coming week as investors keep a close eye on several major events, including the Union Budget 2026, the US Federal Reserve meeting, ongoing corporate earnings, and global developments. After a choppy week marked by selling pressure and global worries, market participants are likely to trade cautiously while looking for clear signals from these key triggers. The domestic equity market ended the week on a weak note after slipping sharply. Profit booking, continued foreign investor selling, and uncertainty over geopolitical issues pulled the benchmarks lower.

Passenger traffic at Incheon airport reaches record high

SEOUL

Passenger traffic at Incheon International Airport exceeded 74 million in 2025, driven by increased flights to and from Japan and China, the airport's operator said on Sunday. A total of 74.07 million passengers traveled through South Korea's main gateway last year, marking the highest annual figure since the airport opened in 2001, according to Incheon International Airport Corp. The 2025 total was up 4.1 percent from 71.15 million passengers recorded a year earlier. In particular, travel demand to Northeast Asian countries surged on the back of unusually long Lunar New Year and Chuseok holidays, China's temporary visa waiver program, and the weakness of the won, which boosted demand for alternative destinations such as Japan and China, the IIAC said.

Bajaj Finance Loses Over ₹14,000 Crore in Market Value

Weak market sentiment and global uncertainties triggered heavy selling, eroding valuations of India's most valuable companies last week

MUMBAI

Bajaj Finance's market capitalisation declined by more than Rs 14,000 crore last week as a broad-based sell-off swept through Indian equities, driven by weak global cues, foreign investor outflows and sustained pressure on the rupee. The downturn reflected a sharp loss of confidence among investors, with nine of India's top-10 most valued companies collectively losing Rs 2.51 lakh crore in market value during the week.

Bajaj Finance emerged as one of the major laggards, with its valuation falling by Rs 14,093.93 crore to Rs 5,77,353.23 crore.

The decline came amid heavy selling pressure across financial and blue-chip stocks as investors turned cautious in response to global uncertainties and muted domestic earnings. The benchmark Sensex witnessed intense selling throughout the week, plunging 2,032.65 points, or 2.43 per cent. Market participants attributed the fall to a combination of adverse international developments, continuous selling by foreign institutional investors, a weakening rupee and lacklustre corporate performance.

Ajit Mishra, Senior Vice President of Research at Religare Broking, said markets remained under pressure for most of the week, with bears firmly in control.

He noted that multiple domestic and global concerns weighed heavily on sentiment, triggering a sharp sell-off across sectors.

Among the top companies, Reliance Industries suffered the steepest loss in absolute terms, with its market capitalisation plunging by Rs 96,960.17 crore to Rs 18,75,533.04 crore.

ICICI Bank saw its valuation decline by Rs 48,644.99 crore to Rs 9,60,825.29 crore, while HDFC Bank lost Rs 22,923.02 crore, taking its market value to Rs 14,09,611.89 crore.

Telecom major Bharti Airtel witnessed a fall of Rs 17,533.97 crore, while Tata Consultancy Services lost Rs 16,588.93 crore in valuation. Engineering major Larsen & Toubro also saw its market value shrink by Rs 15,248.32 crore.

Public sector lender State Bank of India lost Rs 11,907.5 crore, while Infosys declined by Rs 7,810.77 crore. In contrast, Hindustan Unilever was the sole gainer among the top-10 firms, with its market capitalisation rising by Rs 12,311.86 crore.

Wings India 2026 to Showcase India's Rise as Global Aviation Hub

Asia's largest civil aviation event, Wings India 2026, will spotlight India's growing global aviation leadership.

HYDERABAD

With its vast scale, strong global participation and strategic focus, Asia's largest civil aviation event, Wings India 2026, is poised to become a defining milestone for the global aviation community, the government said on Sunday. Scheduled to be held from January 28 to 31 at Begumpet Airport in Hyderabad, the event is expected to draw industry leaders, policymakers and aviation professionals from across the world.

The event will be formally launched by Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu in the presence of senior dignitaries from India and abroad. According to official estimates, Wings India 2026 will feature more than 150 exhibitors, around 7,500 business visitors, nearly one lakh general visitors and over 200 foreign delegates. The event will also host more than 500 business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) meetings, along with aircraft displays featuring over 31 aircraft, underlining its significance on the global aviation calendar.

The Civil Aviation Ministry said the launch of the event would mark the beginning of a landmark global aviation gathering. It will showcase India's transformation into a major aviation hub for connectivity, manufacturing, services, innovation and sustainability, the ministry said in a statement.

Wings India 2026 aims to highlight how India's aviation ecosystem has evolved into a powerful engine of economic growth, regional development and global integration. Over the past decade, India's civil aviation sector has witnessed unprecedented expansion, driven by policy reforms, rising passenger demand and large-scale infrastructure development.

Passenger traffic has grown multifold, placing India among the world's leading aviation markets.

Indian carriers have inducted hundreds of new aircraft in recent years, with record-breaking aircraft orders positioning the country as one of the largest future aircraft markets globally.

The ministry noted that airport infrastructure has expanded rapidly, with the development of new greenfield airports, modernised terminals and enhanced regional connectivity under flagship initiatives such as UDAN. India is also emerging as a strong hub for aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), pilot training, aerospace manufacturing, cargo logistics and advanced air mobility.

Union Budgets under Narendra Modi have reshaped India's economy through reforms, higher incomes and business-friendly policies

Union Budgets under PM Modi Drive Transformation

NEW DELHI

Over the past 11 years, Union Budgets presented under Prime Minister Narendra Modi have increasingly emerged as instruments of structural transformation and policy reform, aimed at strengthening economic growth, improving ease of doing business and enhancing the purchasing power of ordinary citizens. From boosting investor confidence to supporting MSMEs, startups and salaried households, the budgets have reflected a sustained push toward long-term economic stability and inclusiveness. The first Union Budget of the Modi government in 2014–15 laid the foundation for this reform-oriented approach. In a major relief for taxpayers, the personal income tax exemption limit was raised from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh, and to Rs 3 lakh for senior citizens. The investment limit under Section 80C was also increased from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.5 lakh, encouraging household savings. To attract global capital and modernise key sectors, the government raised the foreign direct investment (FDI) cap in defence and insurance from 26 per cent to 49 per cent, signalling India's openness to foreign participation in strategic industries.

Infrastructure development featured prominently in the 2014–15 Budget. The government announced an ambitious plan to develop 100 Smart Cities across the country as satellite towns of larger cities and through the modernisation of existing mid-sized cities, with an initial allocation of Rs 7,060 crore. Rural connectivity received a strong push through an emphasis on the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, while proposals were made for developing new airports and promoting wider use of public-private partnership (PPP) models.

Fast forward to Union Budget 2025–26, and the reform momentum has not only been sustained but intensified. One of the most significant measures is the introduction of the Income Tax Bill, 2025, aimed at replacing India's six-decade-old direct tax framework. The new law seeks to balance investor confidence, taxpayer relief and administrative efficiency. Corporate tax reforms under the Modi government have included a concessional 22 per cent tax rate for companies that do not claim specified exemptions, and a 15 per cent rate for new manufacturing firms for a defined period.

Lawsuit claims Meta can access WhatsApp chats; company calls it 'frivolous'

MUMBAI

A lawsuit against Meta in the US has alleged that its privacy claims are false and Meta and WhatsApp store, analyse, and can access virtually all of WhatsApp users' 'private' communications a claim that has been dismissed by the company as a frivolous work of fiction.

A group of plaintiffs in the lawsuit, filed in US District Court in San Francisco, accused the social media giant and their leaders of defrauding WhatsApp's billions of users worldwide. The group includes plaintiffs from Australia, Brazil, India, Mexico and South Africa. Plaintiffs are now seeking the court to certify a class-action suit.

They alleged that Meta stores the substance of users' communications and that workers can get access to them, according to reports.

Meta said that the lawsuit is frivolous and they will pursue sanctions against plaintiffs' counsel.

Health AI Models Must Be Tested on Diverse Datasets before Deployment: NHA CEO

NEW DELHI

Artificial intelligence models in healthcare must be tested on large and diverse population datasets before being deployed in real-world settings to ensure trust, accuracy and inclusion, National Health Authority Chief Executive Officer Sunil Kumar Barnwal said on Sunday. He emphasised that without proper validation across India's varied demographic and regional landscape, AI-driven healthcare solutions risk being unreliable or exclusionary. Dr Barnwal was speaking at the Federated Intelligence Hackathon on Health AI, organised as a pre-event to the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at IIT Kanpur. He said India is now transitioning from experimentation to building benchmarked, reliable and scalable AI models for healthcare delivery. According to him, federated and consent-driven AI systems offer a way to scale innovation while avoiding the centralisation of sensitive health data, thereby safeguarding privacy and strengthening public trust.

Referring to flagship national programmes such as Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), Dr Barnwal said healthcare AI solutions must be context-ready and aligned with India's socio-economic, demographic and regional diversity. He noted that AI tools trained on narrow datasets may not perform well across different geographies and population groups, underscoring the need for inclusive data frameworks. The national-level hackathon was organised by the National Health Authority in collaboration with the ICMR–National Institute for Research in Digital Health and Data Science (NIRDHDS) and IIT Kanpur.

Half of economists forecast 1 pc growth range

SEOUL

More than half of economic experts expect South Korea's economic growth to remain in the 1 per cent range for the time being, a local survey showed on Sunday. In a survey conducted by Southernpost Inc. at the request of the Korea Enterprises Federation (KEF), 54 percent of 100 economics professors polled said South Korea is likely to post growth in the 1 per cent range this year.

Another 36 per cent projected Asia's fourth-largest economy to achieve growth in the 2 per cent range starting in 2027, driven by a gradual recovery in consumption and demand. Six per cent said growth would fall below 1 per cent, according to the survey.

On average, the economists forecast the South Korean economy to grow 1.8 percent this year, slightly below the government's 2 percent outlook and the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) 1.9 percent projection.

South Korea's economy expanded 1 percent last year, down from 2 percent growth the previous year.

Regarding exchange rates, the respondents projected the won-dollar rate to move between 1,403 won and 1,516 won this year.

Nearly 60 percent of the economists said the outcome of U.S.-South Korea tariff negotiations would have a negative impact on exports to the United States and on domestic corporate investment.

Asked about the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in workplaces, 92 percent said the spread of AI would serve as a substitute for labor shortages and improve productivity, particularly in manufacturing.

Nearly 90 percent also called on the government to adopt effective measures to prevent the overseas leakage of semiconductors and other core technologies, including imposing strict penalties on related violations.

Meanwhile, major global investment banks (IBs) have upgraded their forecasts for South Korea's economic growth, citing a strong semiconductor upcycle, but warned that the economy is showing signs of an uneven K-shaped recovery, a report by the international finance centre said.

DELAY IN INDO-US TRADE DEAL

India–US Trade Deal Uncertainty May Prompt RBI Rate Cuts

NEW DELHI

India's strong economic fundamentals continue to underpin a healthy medium-term growth outlook, but prolonged uncertainty surrounding the proposed India–US trade deal could prompt the Reserve Bank of India to intervene with additional monetary easing, according to Goldman Sachs.

The global brokerage said that while domestic demand drivers remain largely intact, sustained trade-related headwinds could weigh on growth and force policymakers to act.

In a recent note, Goldman Sachs said that if uncertainty over the trade agreement persists beyond the first quarter of FY27 and begins to materially affect economic momentum, the RBI may deploy its remaining policy space to support growth through further rate cuts. The brokerage highlighted that India's mass consumption recovery—particularly in rural areas and among lower-income urban households—is still at a relatively early stage.

This gradual recovery, Goldman Sachs noted, is being supported by several favourable domestic factors. These include a strong crop

cycle, increased state-level transfer payments to women from lower-income households, and goods and services tax (GST) cuts that have disproportionately benefited consumers at the lower end of the income spectrum. Together, these measures are helping demand to pick up steadily, even as global economic uncertainty continues to cloud the external environment.

Speaking in an interaction with NDTV Profit, Santanu Sengupta, Chief India Economist at Goldman Sachs, said the India–US trade deal is still expected to be finalised by the first quarter of FY27.

However, he cautioned that any significant delay—particularly if negotiations spill into the second half of the next financial year—could create meaningful growth headwinds for the Indian economy.

In such a scenario, both the government and the RBI may have to make use of their available policy space to support economic activity, Sengupta said.

He added that while India's overall consumption outlook remains positive, the recovery is uneven across income groups.

According to Sengupta, the affluent segment of consumers, including middle- and high-income households, experienced strong post-pandemic growth but is now showing signs of moderation.

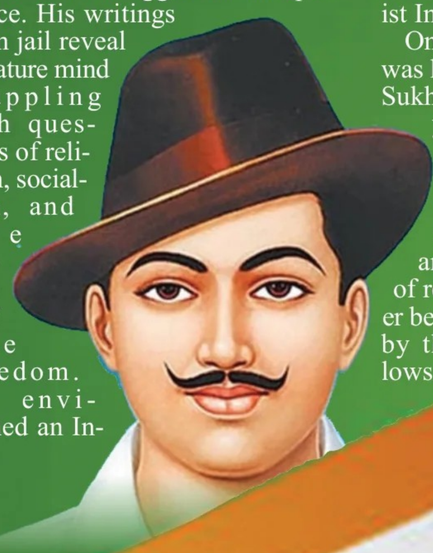
Remembering Real Heroes Who Sacrificed for India

India's independence was not won through words alone, nor was it a gift graciously bestowed upon a grateful nation. It was earned through the blood, sweat, and unwavering determination of countless brave souls who dared to dream of a free India. While history often highlights a select few names, the tapestry of India's freedom struggle is woven with the sacrifices of thousands who gave up comfort, family, and life itself for the cause of liberty. These were not mythical figures but real people with families, dreams, and fears who chose to stand against one of the most powerful empires the world had ever seen. As we live in the comfort of independent India, enjoying freedoms we often take for granted, it becomes our sacred duty to remember these heroes. Their stories are not merely historical footnotes but powerful reminders of the price of freedom and the strength of the human spirit when united for a noble cause. Let us journey through the lives of seven such remarkable freedom fighters whose contributions fundamentally altered the course of Indian history.

Bhagat Singh: The Revolutionary Immortal at Twenty-Three

When we speak of youthful courage and revolutionary fervor, no name shines brighter than Bhagat Singh. Born in 1907 into a family already deeply involved in independence activities, Bhagat Singh was destined for greatness from the start. What makes his story particularly poignant is not just his sacrifice but the depth of his intellectual commitment to India's freedom.

Bhagat Singh was not merely a man of action but also a profound thinker. He read extensively about revolutionary movements worldwide, from the Russian Revolution to the Irish struggle for independence. His writings from jail reveal a mature mind grappling with questions of religion, socialism, and the nature of true freedom. He envisioned an India free not just from British rule but also from the shackles of communalism, casteism, and economic exploitation.



The incident that made him a household name was the 1928 killing of British police officer John Saunders, done to avenge the death of Lala Lajpat Rai during a protest. But it was his bombing of the Central Legislative Assembly in 1929, followed by his deliberate courting of arrest, that truly captured the nation's imagination. Bhagat Singh wanted a platform, and the courtroom became his stage. He used his trial to expose British tyranny and articulate the vision of a free, socialist India.

On March 23, 1931, Bhagat Singh was hanged along with Rajguru and Sukhdev. He was just twenty-three years old. His last words, "They may kill me, but they cannot kill my ideas," proved prophetic. His martyrdom ignited a fire in countless young Indians, proving that the spirit of resistance could never be extinguished by the gallows.

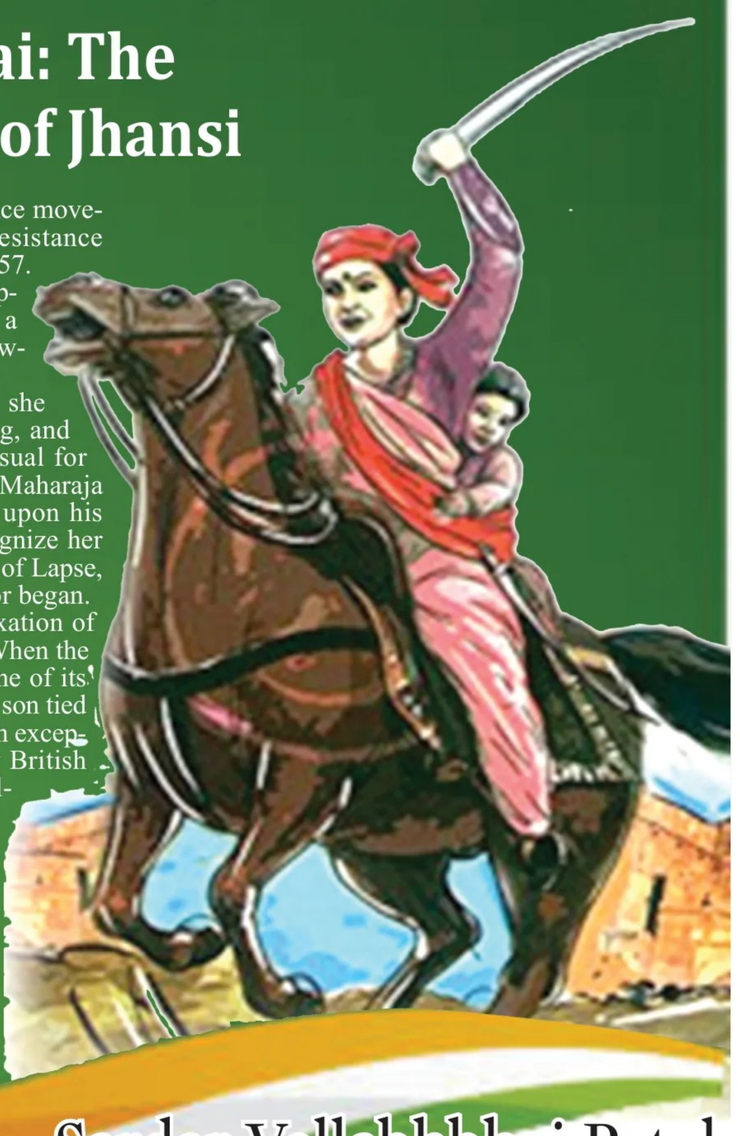
Rani Lakshmibai: The Warrior Queen of Jhansi

Long before the formal independence movement took shape, the seeds of resistance were sown during the Revolt of 1857. Among the most valiant leaders of this uprising was Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, a woman whose courage and military prowess became legendary.

Born as Manikarnika Tambe in 1828, she was trained in martial arts, horse riding, and sword fighting from a young age, unusual for women of her time. After marrying the Maharaja of Jhansi, she became the queen, and upon his death, when the British refused to recognize her adopted son as heir under their Doctrine of Lapse, her transformation from queen to warrior began.

The Rani's resistance to British annexation of Jhansi made her a symbol of defiance. When the revolt broke out in 1857, she became one of its most formidable leaders. With her infant son tied to her back, she fought British forces with exceptional skill and bravery. Contemporary British officers who fought against her acknowledged her military genius and personal courage.

She died in battle in June 1858, fighting until her last breath. The British commander Hugh Rose himself remarked that she was "the most dangerous of all the rebel leaders." Her legacy transcends her lifetime, inspiring generations of women to break free from societal constraints and fight for what they believe in.



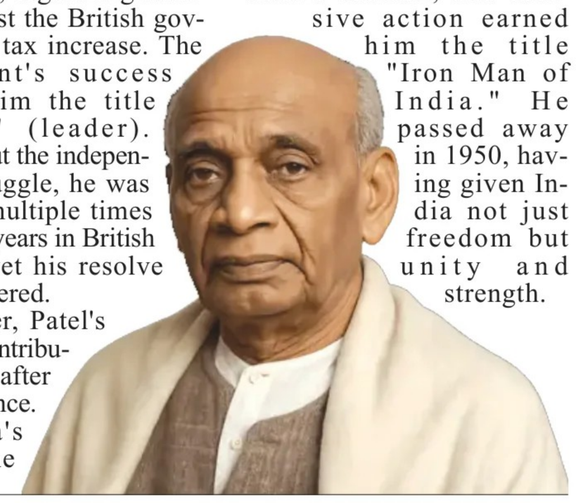
Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: The Iron Man Who United India

While many freedom fighters fought for independence, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel fought both for freedom and for unity. Born in 1875 in Gujarat, Patel was a successful lawyer before Gandhi's call to action transformed his life. What distinguished Patel was his organizational genius and unwavering determination.

During the Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928, Patel demonstrated exceptional leadership, organizing farmers to resist the British government's tax increase. The movement's success earned him the title "Sardar" (leader). Throughout the independence struggle, he was arrested multiple times and spent years in British prisons, yet his resolve never wavered.

However, Patel's greatest contribution came after independence. As India's first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, he undertook the monumental task of integrating over 560 princely states into the Indian Union. Through a combination of diplomacy, persuasion, and when necessary, force, he achieved what many thought impossible. Without Patel's efforts, India might have fragmented into numerous small nations, making the sacrifices of freedom fighters meaningless.

His pragmatism, administrative acumen, and decisive action earned him the title "Iron Man of India." He passed away in 1950, having given India not just freedom but unity and strength.



Chandrasekhar Azad: The Man Who Never Surrendered

If Bhagat Singh was the intellectual revolutionary, Chandrasekhar Azad was the fearless warrior who vowed never to be captured alive by the British. Born in 1906 in Madhya Pradesh, Azad joined the independence movement as a teenager. When a British judge asked his name, he replied "Azad" (free), his father's name as "Swatantrata" (independence), and his residence as "jail," a gesture that defined his defiant spirit.

Azad was a key member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association and was involved in several revolutionary activities, including the famous Kakori Train Robbery of 1925, which funded revolutionary activities. He was a master of disguise and an expert marksman, evading British capture numerous times.

His mentorship of younger revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh shaped the revolutionary movement. Azad believed in complete independence, rejecting any form of dominion status or compromise with the British. On February 27, 1931, cornered by British police in Allahabad's Alfred Park, Azad fought alone until his ammunition ran out. True to his vow, he shot himself with his last bullet, choosing death over surrender.

His sacrifice demonstrated that some ideals are worth dying for, and his fearless approach to the freedom struggle inspired countless others to join the cause without fear of consequences.

Subhas Chandra Bose: The Netaji Who Challenged the Empire Militarily

While Gandhi chose non-violence, Subhas Chandra Bose believed that armed resistance was necessary to overthrow British rule. Born in 1897 in Cuttack, Bose was academically brilliant, clearing the Indian Civil Services examination. However, his conscience would not allow him to serve the British Empire, and he resigned to join the freedom struggle.

Bose's approach was pragmatic and bold. He believed in mobilizing international support and organizing a disciplined military force. His escape from house arrest in India in 1941, journey through Afghanistan and the Soviet Union to Germany, and eventually to Southeast Asia reads like an adventure novel, yet it was all real and driven by a singular purpose: India's freedom.

His greatest achievement was the formation of the Indian National Army (INA) in 1943, comprising Indian prisoners of war and expatriates in Southeast Asia. The INA, under his leadership, fought alongside Japanese forces against the British in Burma and Northeast India. Though militarily the campaign failed, its psychological impact was enormous. The INA trials after the war sparked massive protests across India, and the British realized that the Indian armed forces could no longer be relied upon to maintain their rule.

Bose's mysterious disappearance in August 1945, reportedly in a plane crash in Taiwan, added to his legend. His rallying cry "Give me blood, and I shall give you freedom" encapsulates his philosophy of supreme sacrifice for the motherland.

Mangal Pandey: The Spark That Lit the Fire

Sometimes, a single act of courage can ignite a revolution. Mangal Pandey, a soldier in the British East India Company's army, provided that spark. Born in 1827 in Uttar Pradesh, Pandey was an ordinary sepoy whose extraordinary courage made him a legend.

In March 1857, when rumors spread that the new cartridges for the Enfield rifles were greased with cow and pig fat, offensive to both Hindus and Muslims, resentment among Indian soldiers reached a boiling point. On March 29, 1857, at Barrackpore near Calcutta, Mangal Pandey openly rebelled against his British officers, attacking and wounding them.

Though he was arrested and subsequently hanged on April 8, 1857, his rebellion was the catalyst for the larger uprising that became known as the Revolt of 1857 or the First War of Independence. His defiance showed fellow soldiers that resistance was possible, and within weeks, the revolt spread across northern and central India.

Mangal Pandey's sacrifice demonstrated that the path to freedom would be long and costly, but it had to begin somewhere. His courage to stand alone against the mighty British Empire inspired others to follow, making him one of the first martyrs of India's independence struggle.

Kasturba Gandhi: The Quiet Strength Behind the Mahatma

History often overlooks the contributions of women who stood as pillars of support, and Kasturba Gandhi is one such figure. Born in 1869, she married Mohandas Gandhi when both were just thirteen years old. While Gandhi's transformation from a lawyer to the Mahatma is well-documented, Kasturba's parallel journey from a traditional wife to a freedom fighter in her own right deserves recognition.

Initially uneducated and confined to traditional roles, Kasturba gradually evolved under Gandhi's influence, but more importantly, she influenced him as well. She participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement, the Salt Satyagraha, and the Quit India Movement. She was arrested multiple times and endured harsh prison conditions without complaint.

Kasturba's courage was evident during the Quit India Movement when, despite ill health, she continued to address meetings and inspire women to join the struggle. Her speeches encouraged women to step out of their homes and participate in the freedom movement, challenging societal norms.

She died in British custody in 1944 at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune, where she and Gandhi were imprisoned. Her death was a personal tragedy for Gandhi and a loss for the nation. Kasturba represented millions of Indian women who supported the freedom struggle, often making equal or greater sacrifices than their more famous counterparts.

These seven freedom fighters represent just a fraction of the countless Indians who sacrificed for independence. Each came from different backgrounds, employed different methods, and made different contributions, yet all were united by a common dream: a free India. Their sacrifices remind us that freedom is never free. It is purchased with the blood of patriots, preserved through the vigilance of citizens, and honored by living up to the ideals for which they fought. As we enjoy the liberties they won for us, we must ask ourselves: Are we worthy of their sacrifice? Are we building the India they envisioned—one free from oppression, inequality, and injustice? Remembering these heroes is not about dwelling in the past but about drawing inspiration for the present and future. Their courage should motivate us to fight against corruption, stand up for justice, and work toward making India truly great. Each time we exercise our right to vote, speak freely, or pursue our dreams without colonial oppression, we honor their memory. Let us never forget that the comfortable lives we lead today were made possible by heroes who chose the hard path, who valued freedom over comfort, principle over convenience, and country over self. Their stories deserve to be told, retold, and celebrated, ensuring that future generations understand the true cost of independence and the priceless value of freedom.

MBAPPÉ brace at Villarreal sends Real Madrid back to La Liga summit

MBAPPÉ FIRES MADRID BACK TOP

Kylian Mbappé struck twice as Real Madrid beat Villarreal 2-0 to return to the top of La Liga. The French forward opened the scoring early in the second half before converting an injury-time penalty, taking his league tally to 21 goals in 20 games. The win moved Madrid two points clear of Barcelona, who can regain first place with victory on Sunday. The result continued Madrid's revival under new coach Álvaro Arbeloa, who has now guided the side to three straight wins after a turbulent start.

BARCELONA

Kylian Mbappé's clinical brace powered Real Madrid to a 2-0 victory at Villarreal, lifting the reigning champions back to the top of La Liga despite recent turbulence both on and off the pitch.

Mbappé broke the deadlock early in the second half before sealing the win with an injury-time penalty, taking his league-leading tally to 21 goals in just 20 appearances this season. The result moved Madrid two points clear of Barcelona, who can reclaim first place with a home win over bottom-placed Real Oviedo on Sunday.

The victory capped a steady revival for Madrid after a turbulent fortnight that saw the club part ways with coach Xabi Alonso following defeat to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final. His successor, Álvaro Arbeloa, endured a rough start with a shock Copa del Rey exit to a second-tier side, sparking protests from supporters during recent home matches.

French star strikes twice as Madrid overcome turmoil to move ahead Barcelona

However, Arbeloa has now overseen three straight victories, and the win at Villarreal underlined Madrid's ability to grind out results even when performances have not always convinced. A loss by Barcelona at Real Sociedad last weekend had opened the door, and Madrid seized the opportunity.

Arbeloa praised Mbappé and Vinícius Júnior, whose direct running and creativity were central to both goals. "They are two of the best players in the world. They break down defences and we try to get them as many touches as possible," Arbeloa said, adding that winning at Villarreal was "a result of collective effort."

Mbappé's opener came in the 47th minute after he reacted quickest to a loose ball following a Vinícius cross, firing past goalkeeper Luiz Júnior. Villarreal missed chances to respond, notably when Gerard Moreno blazed over from close range.

Mbappé later converted a penalty after being tripped by Alfonso Pedraza, putting the result beyond doubt. Villarreal slipped to fourth, 10 points behind Madrid, as the title race intensified at the summit of La Liga.

Augsburg stun Bayern, hand champions first Bundesliga defeat

Bavarian rivals shock league leaders as Bayern's long unbeaten run ends.

BERLIN

Bayern Munich's dominance in the Bundesliga was jolted as regional rivals Augsburg produced a stunning 2-1 victory at the Allianz Arena, inflicting the champions' first league defeat of the season and underlining that supremacy in Germany does not always extend across Bavaria.

Bayern had been unbeaten in 27 Bundesliga matches and were enjoying the best start to a season in league history, but Augsburg once again proved to be their bogey side. The visitors had famously ended Bayern's record 53-game unbeaten run in April 2014 and repeated the feat by halting another lengthy streak.

The hosts took the lead in the 23rd minute when Hiroki Ito headed home from Michael Olise's corner. Despite controlling possession and creating chances, Bayern failed to extend their advantage, and Augsburg grew in belief as the game wore on. Augsburg midfielder Robin Fellhauer struck the crossbar before halftime, a warning sign that went unheeded.

Augsburg's persistence paid off in the 75th minute when Arthur Chaves equalised, glancing a corner past goalkeeper Jonas Urbig. Just six minutes later, Han-Noah Massengo completed the turnaround, meeting Dimitrios Giannoulis' cross to silence the home crowd.

Bayern pushed desperately for an equaliser, but Olise's fierce strike crashed off the crossbar with virtually the last kick of the match. "It's extremely annoying to lose a Bundesliga game, but the crucial thing is our reaction," said Bayern midfielder Joshua Kimmich, admitting the result was probably fair.

The defeat was Bayern's first in the league since March 8 and comes despite them sitting on 50 points with a remarkable goal difference of plus-57 after 18 rounds. Augsburg, meanwhile, earned a morale-boosting win after failing to claim a victory since early December and starting the day just three points above the relegation zone.

Elsewhere, Borussia Dortmund cut Bayern's lead to eight points with a 3-0 win at Union Berlin, keeping the title race alive with 15 rounds still to play.

Bediako Shines in Alabama Return, Sparks Impact despite Loss

TUSCALOOSA

Charles Bediako made a statement in his long-awaited return to basketball, delivering an energetic performance for No. 17 Alabama despite a 79-73 defeat to Tennessee. Playing his first game in nearly three years, the 7-foot center finished with 13 points, three rebounds, four dunks, two steals, and two blocks in 25 minutes. Bediako entered amid a raucous ovation with 16:11 remaining in the first half and quickly made his presence felt, scoring on pick-and-roll plays and alley-oop passes, while a thunderous block sparked a fast break leading to a dunk.

"It felt right to come back. That staff really trusts and believes in me and plays to my strengths," Bediako said after the game, highlighting his bond with coach Nate Oats. With starting center Aiden Sherrell in foul trouble, Bediako logged the fourth-most minutes and posted the highest plus-minus rating on the team at plus-10, providing Alabama with the inside presence it had missed all season.

Bediako had entered the NBA draft in 2023 but went undrafted, playing in the NBA G League most recently for the Motor City Cruise. His eligibility to return was temporarily reinstated by Tuscaloosa Circuit Court Judge James H. Roberts Jr., who blocked the NCAA from imposing penalties, allowing Bediako to participate fully for the next 10 days while his request for a preliminary injunction progresses. Oats praised his integration into the team, saying, "For a guy that's been here a few days, to fit in with the team, I thought he was good. He's a great teammate and is going to help us moving forward."

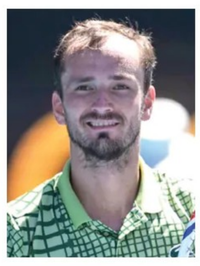
Bediako will look to build on his impressive debut when Alabama hosts Missouri on Tuesday, as his return could reshape the pathway between the NBA and college basketball for future players.

Learner Tien upsets *Daniil Medvedev* again at Aus Open in straight-sets win

MELBOURNE

American Learner Tien delivered a stunning straight-sets victory over Daniil Medvedev at the Australian Open on Sunday, dismantling the Russian 6-4, 6-0, 6-3 to reach the quarter-finals of a Grand Slam for the first time in his career.

The 20-year-old produced a fearless and clinical display on Margaret Court Arena, completing the match in just one hour and 42 minutes — a stark contrast to their marathon five-set battle in Melbourne last year. This time, there was no drawn-out drama, only sustained pressure and ruthless execution from the young American.



Tien's performance was all the more remarkable given an early interruption. Just 10 minutes into the contest, he was forced to take a medical timeout to deal with a nosebleed, stuffing tissues into his nostrils before resuming play. The brief pause did little to disrupt his rhythm. If anything, it appeared to sharpen his focus as he left Medvedev increasingly frustrated and out of answers.

Breaking serve in the opening game, Tien dictated play with clean groundstrokes and intelligent shot selection, sealing the first set with a forehand winner down the line. Medvedev, who has admitted discomfort playing the left-hander after their previous encounters, struggled to cope with Tien's pace and court coverage.

The second set turned one-sided as Tien surged into a double break and raced to a 4-0 lead. Medvedev visibly appealed to his coaching team for solutions, but none materialised. Tien closed out the set 6-0 — the first time Medvedev has been "bagelled" in a Grand Slam — with another emphatic backhand winner.

The pattern continued early in the third set, with Tien mixing drop shots and depth to move 3-0 ahead. Though Medvedev briefly clawed back a break, the American steadied himself and finished the match with composure to hand the three-time finalist his first defeat of the season.

Novak Djokovic through to Melbourne quarter-finals after Mensik pullout

MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic advanced to the quarter-finals of the Australian Open on Sunday without hitting a ball after his fourth-round opponent, Jakub Mensik, withdrew from the tournament due to an abdominal injury.

The 20-year-old Czech, seeded 16th, had been scheduled to face the 10-time Australian Open champion on Monday but announced his decision a day earlier, saying the injury had worsened over the course of the tournament. Mensik had battled through a demanding third-round match against American Ethan Quinn on Saturday, winning 6-2, 7-6(5), 7-6(5), but admitted he was unable to recover in time.

"This is a tough one to write," Mensik posted on Instagram. "After doing everything we could to keep going, I have to withdraw from the Australian Open due to an abdominal muscle injury that has progressed over the last matches. Now, it's time to recover properly." Despite his disappointment, Mensik reflected positively on his run in Melbourne, having reached the fourth round of the Australian Open for the first time. "Making the fourth round here is something I will carry with me for a long time," he wrote. "The energy from the fans and the atmosphere in Melbourne were truly special."

For Djokovic, the walkover keeps alive his pursuit of a record-extending title at Melbourne Park and a standalone 25th Grand Slam crown, which would move him clear of Margaret Court on the all-time list. The Serb, seeded fourth this year, has looked increasingly sharp in the early rounds as he manages his body carefully in the Australian summer heat. The withdrawal also denied fans a rematch of last year's Miami Open final, where Mensik stunned Djokovic to claim the biggest victory of his young career. That result had added intrigue to their prospective Melbourne meeting.

Man City wins after dropping Haaland, Liverpool loses on stoppage-time goal

LONDON

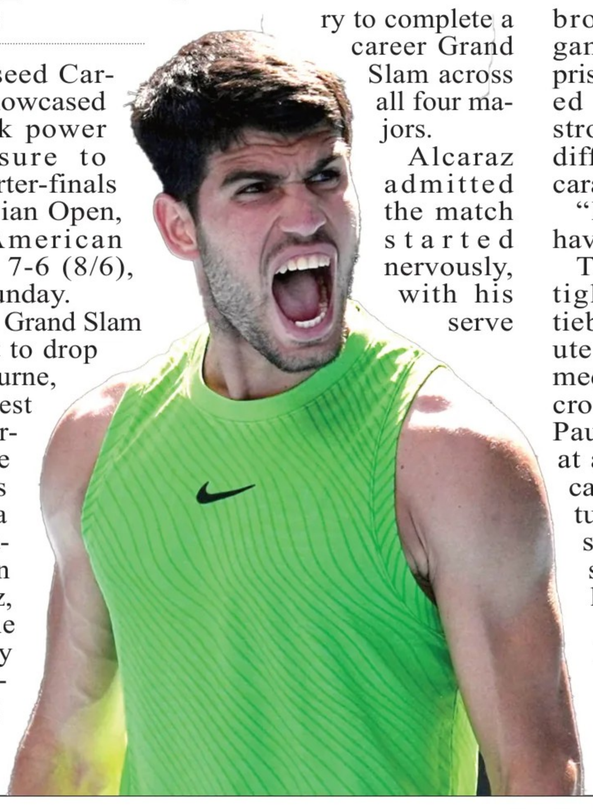
Dropping Erling Haaland proved a masterstroke as Manchester City steadied their Premier League campaign, while Liverpool's long unbeaten run ended in dramatic fashion. Manchester City responded to back-to-back defeats with a composed 2-0 victory over bottom-placed Wolverhampton Wanderers, easing pressure on manager Pep Guardiola. Haaland, the league's most feared striker, was surprisingly left on the bench after managing just one goal in eight games, and City looked sharper and more fluid without him. Omar Marmoush and Antoine Semenyo, deployed as high wingers in a tweaked system, scored first-half goals to put City firmly in control. Semenyo, who joined from Bournemouth earlier this season, continued his fine form with his third goal in four matches and later struck the crossbar. New signing Marc Guehi also made his first start, adding much-needed solidity to a defense that had looked vulnerable in recent losses. Haaland came on in the 73rd minute but had little impact. City comfortably saw out the win to move four points behind league leaders Arsenal. Guardiola, however, was unhappy with refereeing decisions, particularly a denied penalty after a handball review. Liverpool, by contrast, suffered heartbreak. Their 13-match unbeaten league run ended with a 3-2 defeat at Bournemouth after Amine Adli scored a scrappy winner in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

CARLOS ALCARAZ Advances to Australian Open Quarter-Finals in Straight Sets

MELBOURNE

Spanish top seed Carlos Alcaraz showcased his trademark power and composure to reach the quarter-finals of the Australian Open, defeating American Tommy Paul 7-6 (8/6), 6-4, 7-5 on Sunday.

The six-time Grand Slam champion, yet to drop a set in Melbourne, matched his best run at the tournament while continuing his pursuit of a maiden Australian Open crown. Alcaraz, 22, is now one victory away from potentially becoming the youngest man in history to complete a career Grand Slam across all four majors.



Alcaraz admitted the match started nervously, with his serve broken in the opening game, giving Paul a surprising 3-1 lead. "He started really strong, really strong shots, it was a bit difficult at the start," Alcaraz said.

"But I knew I would have my chances."

The first set remained tight, culminating in a tiebreak where a 15-minute interruption due to a medical emergency in the crowd seemed to unsettle Paul, who double-faulted at a crucial moment. Alcaraz seized the momentum, carrying it into the second and third sets to seal victory in two hours and 44 minutes.

Alcaraz's serving has been particularly impressive, combining precision and consistency, earning comparisons to Novak Djokovic's technique.

"In general in the four matches the serve has been a really important weapon for me," he said, noting his satisfaction with the clean execution of his first serve.

In the quarter-finals, Alcaraz will face either Australia's Alex de Minaur or Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik, with the winner securing a place in the semi-finals and keeping the dream of a first Melbourne title alive.

Alcaraz's dominant performance on Rod Laver Arena under cooler conditions demonstrated his ability to maintain focus, adapt under pressure, and step closer to adding another historic chapter to his young but already illustrious career.

Pakistan name 15-man T20 WC squad, drop boycott threat after B'desh exit

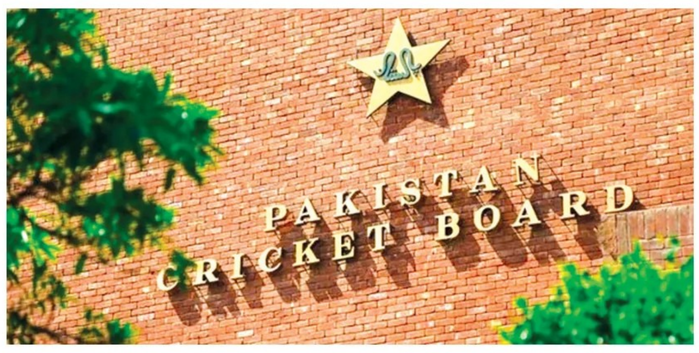
Salman Ali Agha to lead Pakistan as PCB confirms participation in T20 showpiece

LAHORE

Pakistan on Sunday named a 15-member squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup, effectively ending speculation over a possible boycott after the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had earlier threatened to withdraw in solidarity with Bangladesh.

Salman Ali Agha has been appointed captain of a squad that blends experienced campaigners with several first-time entrants to a global ICC event. The tournament will be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8, with all of Pakistan's group matches scheduled to be played in Sri Lanka.

PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi had previously indicated that Pakistan could skip the tournament after the International Cricket Council (ICC) replaced Bangladesh with Scotland. Bangladesh were removed following their refusal to travel to India, citing security concerns. Naqvi had said the Pakistan government would take the final call on participation, but the announcement of the squad confirms Pakistan's presence at the event.



The squad was unveiled at a press conference at the Gaddafi Stadium by PCB High Performance Director Aqib Javed, captain Agha and white-ball head coach Michael James Hesson. Aqib said the selectors had largely backed continuity, with most players also set to feature in the upcoming home T20 series against Australia.

There were no major surprises, though medium-pacer Mohammad Wasim Jr missed out. The selectors opted for a spin-heavy combination, naming specialist spinners Abrar Ahmed and mystery spinner Usman Tariq, alongside spin all-rounders Mohammad Nawaz, Shadab Khan and Saim Ayub.

Young batter Khawaja Mohammad Nafay, who has played just one T20I, was also included, underlining the selectors' willingness to invest in emerging talent. Agha, Faheem Ashraf, Nafay, Mohammad Salman Mirza, Sahibzada Farhan and Usman Tariq will all experience their first ICC mega-event.

Pakistan are placed in Group A and will open their campaign against the Netherlands in Colombo on February 7. The squad announcement brings clarity after weeks of uncertainty and shifts the focus firmly back to on-field preparations.

Absence of Bangladesh from T20 WC a sad moment for the game: Players' body

NEW DELHI

Cricketers' association urges unity after Bangladesh withdrawal over safety concerns and scheduling impasse.

The absence of Bangladesh from next month's Twenty20 World Cup has been described as a "sad moment" for the sport, with the World Cricketers' Association (WCA) urging cricket's stakeholders to work towards unity rather than allowing division to deepen.

Bangladesh were replaced by Scotland in the 20-team tournament after refusing to tour India, citing safety concerns amid strained political relations between the neighbouring countries. The International Cricket Council (ICC) subsequently rejected Bangladesh's request to move their fixtures to co-host Sri Lanka, stating that altering the schedule so close to the February 7 start of the tournament was not feasible.

"The withdrawal of Bangladesh from the T20 World Cup, and the resulting absence of a valued cricketing nation from cricket's pinnacle international T20 event, is a sad moment for our sport, the Bangladesh players and their fans," WCA chief executive Tom Moffat said in a statement.

Moffat called on cricket's leadership to reflect on the broader implications of the decision. "Rather than allowing division or exclusion to take hold, we urge the game's leaders to work with all stakeholders — including governing bodies, leagues and players — to unite the sport, not divide it," he said.

The developments have highlighted growing tensions within South Asian cricket. Pakistan, meanwhile, are scheduled to play all their matches in Sri Lanka, although their participation remains uncertain. Pakistan Cricket Board chief Mohsin Naqvi said a final decision would be taken after consultations with the country's prime minister.

Moffat also expressed concern over what he described as a pattern of agreements not being honoured and insufficient consultation with players and their representatives. "It highlights significant issues with the game's existing operating model at the global level," he said.

"If these issues continue to be left unaddressed, they will weaken trust, unity and ultimately the health and future of the game we all care deeply about," Moffat added.

Ganguly brings sense of calm to dressing room: Keshav Maharaj

CAPE TOWN

Pretoria Capitals captain Keshav Maharaj has credited head coach Sourav Ganguly for instilling belief, calm and clarity within the squad, saying the former India captain's experience of handling high-pressure situations has played a crucial role in the team's resurgence in the SA20.

Capitals skipper says Ganguly's experience and positivity transformed team culture before final

Under Maharaj's leadership and Ganguly's guidance, the Capitals have staged a remarkable turnaround this season after failing to make the playoffs in the previous two editions. "Dada was really excited, obviously it's his first assignment as head coach," Maharaj said ahead of the summit clash. "He's been a captain who won many big occasions for India, and feeding off his knowledge, having someone of his stature in the change room, has brought that sense of calm."

Maharaj described Ganguly as positive, approachable and deeply invested in player development. "He gives everyone the same love, care and attention. He just wants the best out of his players," he added.

The Capitals recovered momentum after an inconsistent league phase, something Maharaj attributed to Ganguly's calm handling of pressure. "We've had an up-and-down season and haven't played too well at home, but we've found rhythm at the right time. Now it's about sticking to our basics," he said.

On conditions, Maharaj expressed optimism about the Newlands pitch after a slow surface in Qualifier 2. He also allayed fitness concerns, confirming Dewald Brevis has recovered from a finger injury and Lungi Ngidi is expected to be fit.

Sunrisers captain Tristan Stubbs, meanwhile, said his side was focused on execution rather than revenge, as they chase a historic third SA20 title.

Saudi Arabia postpones 2029 Asian Winter Games at NEOM

RIYADH

Saudi Arabia and the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) have agreed to postpone the 2029 Asian Winter Games, which were scheduled to be hosted at the futuristic NEOM mega-project, the kingdom's Olympic Committee said in a joint statement.

No revised timeline was announced, and neither organisation offered an official reason for the postponement. The decision marks a notable setback for Saudi Arabia, which has invested heavily in positioning itself as a global hub for major sporting and cultural events over the next decade.The Asian Winter Games were to be staged at Trojena, a planned mountain resort within NEOM that is designed to host outdoor sports and offer year-round skiing despite the region's lack of natural snow. Along with the 2034 FIFA World Cup and the 2030–2031 Riyadh Expo, the Winter Games had provided firm deadlines to drive progress on some of the kingdom's most ambitious infrastructure projects. A source at the Saudi Olympic Committee told that discussions would now take place to identify a new date for hosting the Games in NEOM.

Bangladesh opens door for *Shakib Al Hasan's* return to international cricket

DHAKA

Bangladesh cricket authorities said former captain Shakib Al Hasan could return to the national side, signalling a possible comeback for the star all-rounder whose international career stalled amid political turmoil and public backlash in recent years.

Shakib, one of Bangladesh's greatest cricketers, retired from international cricket in 2024 but indicated last month that he was keen to reverse that decision. His future had appeared uncertain due to his association with the former ruling party led by Sheikh Hasina, which was overthrown in a student-led uprising in 2024. Shakib, who had served as a lawmaker, became a target of public anger and was among several individuals named in investigations related to a deadly police crackdown on protesters.

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) senior official Amzad Hossain said the board had unanimously agreed to keep the door open for Shakib's return, subject to specific conditions. "If Shakib Al Hasan's availability, fitness and accessibility allow it, and if he can be present at the venues where matches are played, then the board and the selection panel will consider him for the national team," Hossain told reporters. He also confirmed that the BCB would issue Shakib no-objection certificates to feature in overseas leagues. "If he wants to participate in other global tournaments, the board will provide him NOC as required," Amzad added.

Shakib had earlier apologised for remaining silent during the uprising but defended his decision to serve the government that was later toppled. He has not returned to Bangladesh since the collapse of Hasina's administration and was playing in a domestic T20 league in Canada at the time.

The development comes as Bangladesh cricket faces significant turmoil, having been replaced by Scotland in next month's T20 World Cup after refusing to travel to India on security grounds. The ICC said it found no credible threat, but the BCB maintained the matter was beyond its control. Shakib has represented Bangladesh in 71 Tests, 247 ODIs and 129 T20Is, claiming a combined 712 wickets and leaving an enduring impact on the country's cricketing history.

Sourav retains billiards crown, Aarav claims 3rd national title

BAHADURGARH

Competing under the shadow of personal loss, Sourav Kothari produced a stirring performance to retain his senior men's billiards title at the National Championships, while Maharashtra's Aarav Sancheti continued his golden run by securing his third title in as many days.

Encouraged by family members to take part despite the recent passing of his father Manoj Kothari, a former IBSF world billiards champion, Sourav registered an emotional 4-0 victory over S Shrikrishna in the best-of-seven final. After potting the decisive red in the fourth frame, Sourav looked skywards in a touching tribute, clearly dedicating the triumph to his late father, who passed away on January 5, just days before the tournament began.Despite the weight of grief, Sourav was largely dominant throughout the final. Shrikrishna, who had been in fine form recently, struggled to impose himself. Sourav capitalised on early errors with a sublime unfinished break of 142 to take the opening frame, followed by another commanding unfinished 138 in the second. He then delivered a silken 150 break in the third frame after Shrikrishna faltered following a 95 break.

The fourth frame saw a brief dip in fluency as Sourav missed a few chances, allowing Shrikrishna opportunities to stage a comeback. However, the challenger failed to take advantage, and Sourav closed out the match with small but decisive contributions before breaking down emotionally after sealing the title.

MS Dhoni begins IPL 2026 preparations?

VIRAL VIDEO CREATES BUZZ

RANCHI

Former India and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has returned to training in Ranchi, triggering widespread speculation that the iconic wicket-keeper-batter has begun preparations for the IPL 2026 season. The buzz began after the Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) shared a short video clip on social media showing Dhoni padded up for a net session. Captioned "Look who is back," the post quickly went viral, exciting fans and reigniting discussions around Dhoni's future in the Indian Premier League. The JSCA further hailed him as the "Pride of JSCA" in the post. In the clip, Dhoni is seen chatting casually with former India batter and JSCA official Saurabh Tiwary before heading into the nets, a sight that delighted supporters who have grown accustomed to his low-profile appearances outside the IPL window. While there has been no official word from Dhoni or CSK regarding his plans, the timing of the session has added to the intrigue. The IPL 2026 season is scheduled to be held from March 26 to May 31, leaving ample time for franchises and players to finalize preparations. Dhoni retired from international cricket in August 2020 but has continued to feature exclusively in the IPL, where his presence remains central to CSK's identity. Although Ruturaj Gaikwad has taken over as captain, Dhoni continues to play a key leadership role within the squad, both on and off the field.

One of the most successful players in IPL history, Dhoni has amassed 5,439 runs in 278 matches since the league's inception in 2008.

City Hilights (English Daily) published by P. Sunil Kumar (Publisher) on behalf of Immaculate Broadcasting Consortium World News (P) Ltd., No. 18, JRV Court, Queens's Road, Bengaluru – 560001 and printed at Manipal Media Network Limited Opp. Govt School, Kempalinganahalli, Near Kunigal Cross, Nelamangala TQ, Bangalore Rural Dist. -562123, Printed at No-7/2 plot no.CA-3/1,28(p)&29(p) Kapanoor 2nd Stage Industrial Area Kapnoor Village Kalaburagi -585104. Printed at S. J. R. V. Printers, No. 208 Plot No. B-019 KSSIDC Industrial Area, Irfan Ahamed Khan Pathan, 4th Main Road Gamanagatti, Hubballi-Dharwad – 580025. and Elegant Offset Printers Pvt. Ltd. No. 5-61/1, Shed No. M-6, Yeyyadi Industrial Estate, Yeyyadi, Mangalore - 575 008. (RNI No: KARENG / 2015 / 63243), Regd. No. BGGPO-2581/2017-2019 Posted at Bengaluru PSO-560026 Email - cityhilights.news@gmail.com Phone: 080-41209042. Copyright. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.